Grand Right *and* Left

Stoddard King

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By

Stoddard King

Author of "What the Queen Said,"

WITHDRAWN
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GRAND RIGHT AND LEFT
—A—
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TO

PENELOPE AND BARBARA

Foreword

These few chapters from an old man's life were written on a farm in North Dakota. American literature will never amount to much unless American writers stop going to Paris or Italy to write their books. Gertrude Stein once said something very pungent to Ernest Hemingway in this connection. She said—do you remember?—

"If the stop go stop go stop go if the stop."

How very like Gertrude, and how clever of Hemingway to grasp her meaning after the first drink. Sherwood Anderson could not have done it, or Hans Christian Andersen, either.

The more I think of it, the more I am convinced that Knut Hamsun was right, and Clemenceau wrong.

The last time I saw Clemenceau—quel homme!—was on the *plage*, at Cannes, in 1923. I had gone there especially to see him, and found him willing to give the best part of an hour to any *sale Américain*, as he genially put it. My errand was to persuade him to write his memoirs for the magazine which I represented. The magazine was called Intimate Confessions. In a friendly but firm manner, Clemenceau refused to comply with my request, on the quaint pretext that his memoirs would not be fit to print. He was not, I saw at once, familiar with current American periodical literature.

I pointed out to him that Kemal Pasha had just sold his memoirs for the equivalent of several million francs.

"True," said the Tiger of France, a frosty twinkle in his eye, "but who in *l'enfer* wants to be a Kemal?"

That set me thinking, naturally. And so, when it came time

to set down my notes on the American Scene, I went to a little farm in North Dakota. Perhaps our New England writers would not call it a little farm, as it included all of one county and parts of two others. Still, it was the smallest farm they had. Adopting the name of Bjorn Sjtjornjsen for protective coloration, I did my work under the purest of American influences. On the farms adjacent to mine, other writers were creating. I think they are still there, as they were all writing Sagas of the Soil. It takes several years to write a Saga of the Soil, and a decade or so to read one.

I mention all this because it may account for the faint tinge of melancholy that, I am told, pervades most of what I have written. A little of the soil may have got into my style. But anyway, it is nice clean dirt.

S. K.

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A good many of these verses and sketches were written especially for this volume. Others first appeared in the *Spokane Spokesman-Review* and in *Life*, and permission to reprint them is gratefully acknowledged.

Grand Right and Left

GRAND RIGHT AND LEFT

FABLE OF THE GREGARIOUS ZEBRAS

The Zebras of a certain region,
Whose business throve, whose name was Legion,
Feared that their group might be despised
Because it was not organized.
The Dik-Diks had their proper coterie,
Not altogether unlike Rotary,
The Yaks made free with fork and spoon
Punctiliously each Wednesday noon,
And there were small but snappy clubs
Of Elands and of Oskabubs.
(The Oskabub's unknown to fame,
But isn't it a lovely name?)

Example's force is swift and strong.
It did not take the Zebras long
To see their plight, and realize
That it was time to organize.
As the phrase has it, they were Sold
On Fellowship's unminted Gold.
Wherefore, and not without fatigue,
They formed the Zebra Service League,
With badges done in tasty reds,
Refined but striking letter heads,
A Secretary drawing pay,
And a most sacred Meeting Day.
It also was their firm intention

To hold an Annual Convention,
And frequent philanthropic Drives,
And dancing parties for their wives.
(Wives look with a suspicious glance
At parties where one does not dance.)

So that was that, and all went well
As the proverbial Marriage Bell,
Until the time arrived to settle
What Cause should try the Zebras' mettle.
The strictest of unwritten laws
Requires each Club to have a Cause,
Designed to make the members feel
Their duty to the Common Weal,
And also to relieve distress
And get due notice from the Press.
There is no Club, however gay
Its conduct on its Meeting Day,
However brisk the songs it sings,
But has its mind on Worth While Things,
Its frivolous behavior masks
Its zeal for big, constructive tasks.
Its Pep-Songs are an obligato
To a high-class, uplifting Motto;
Toward higher things each Club is led
Even when throwing bits of bread.
The Zebras with high ardor shone
To make some Cause their very own,
And named Committees to pursue
Some Worth While Thing that they could do,
But such was their unhappy fate
They found they had arrived too late.
The Dik-Diks were the local sponsors
For poor and crippled Chirotonsors,

The Yaks were guardians of a fund
For financing the Saengerbund,
The Elands gave, entirely free,
A yearly public Christmas Tree—
In short, the Zebras' hopes were blighted,
For every Cause was copyrighted!

Thus, in depression and fatigue,
Expired the Zebra Service League;
No more the Zebras meet at Lunch,
Their fellowship has lost its punch.
The truest this of all old saws:
You can't have fun without a Cause!

* * *

FABLE OF THE WOMBAT AND HIS WIFE, TWO LEOPARDS, AND A SHETLAND PONY

This Fable is a Slice of Life . . .
A certain Wombat and his Wife,
Two Leopards and a Shetland Pony
Compose the Dramatis Personæ.
The Wombat differs from the Camel
By being a Marsupial Mammal,
And Leopards aid dramatic plots
By being slow to change their spots.
(I only used the Shetland Pony
To rhyme with Dramatis Personæ,
Though, even in this Horseless Age,
One still sees Ponies—on the Stage.)

This fable, or this little story,
Or, if you like, this Allegory,
As I shall now proceed to tell
Shows plainly how the Wombat fell—
No really modern person knows,
Or cares, how anybody rose.

The Wombat and his mate abode
At South Two Hundred Walnut Road,
A district modest, unobtrusive,
And yet, to some extent, exclusive.
They kept an up-to-date *ménage*,
They had two cars in their garage,
And went abroad to spend the Summer—
The Wombat was a Wholesale Plumber.

However, grim domestic strife
Beset the Wombat and his Wife,
And all about their board and bed
Dissatisfaction reared its head,
Simply because, as he disbursed
For bills, on January First,
The Wombat had remarked, "My dear,
We mustn't spend so much this year."
An innocent enough remark,
But tinder caught the flying spark.
She coveted (which is a sin)
A dashing coat of Leopard skin
Made public, just the day before,
By Mrs. Wallaby, next door;
She mentioned this, then came the cry:
"If she can have one, why can't I?"
(No Husband with a grain of sense
Should talk of cutting down expense.)

I put the salient facts before you—
The horrible details would bore you.
The Wombat, it's enough to say,
Swore, took his hat, and went away,
And sought to soothe his saddened soul
With excerpts from the Flowing Bowl.
He looked for comfort in the cup,
And sought to send his spirits up,
After the manner of the town,
By sending other spirits down.
These matters are not meet for rhyme—
Pause indicates the flight of time.

Came Dawn, the harbinger of Day—
Two peaceful Leopards passed that way;

They looked so very much alike
(I think their names were Pat and Mike)
They might have been one beast seen double.
The Wombat, wrestling with his trouble,
And likewise loaded to the chin
With so-called Sympathetic Gin,
Which sober judgment sadly jeopards,
Objected to so many Leopards,
And loathed, as is the way with sots,
Their multiplicity of spots.
Before the people standing near
Could do a thing to interfere,
He shot those Leopards where they stood—
His aim, in spite of all, was good.
Alas, alas! for mortal sin,
Alas! for Sympathetic Gin,
Which makes more stumbling wretches fall
Then even Wooden Alcohol!

The Morning after, in his cell,
The Wombat, feeling far from swell,
Feeling, in fact, like Thirty Cents,
Reviewed the previous night's events—
The scene of harsh domestic strife,
The parting query of his wife:
"If she can have one, why can't I?"—
Eureka! There's an Alibi.

He told this story to the Judge,
He stuck to it and would not budge;
And when the Warden came to claim him
He told it still, and who can blame him?
(For Wombats, after all, are human):—
"I DID IT FOR THE LITTLE WOMAN!"

* * *

FABLE OF THE GALLIWAMPUS, THE GNU AND THE GYASCUTUS

A Galliwampus and a Gnu
Had started boarding at a Zoo;
The Galliwampus is a beast
Of which you must have heard, at least,
And, even if you shun the Zoo,
The Gnu can not be new to you.
Fastidious in the extreme,
They grumbled at the Zoo régime,
They raised a howl for more steam heat,
And called for music with their meat.
They wrangled in a long debate
Concerning their unhappy state,
But could not always quite agree
Which one deserved more sympathy.

A Gyascutus old and gray
Was in a cage across the way;
He had been living at the Zoo
Since Fourteen Hundred Ninety Two;
And after he, with patient pain,
Had heard his neighbors both complain
About their troubles night and day,
He lifted up his voice to say:
"Your happiness may not touch par,
But please remember where you are.
Remember Zoos were not invented
To keep the jungle beast contented,
To set the Galliwampus free,

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Or start a Gnu-theology,
But simply to reward the gaze
Of folks who come here Saturdays—
And they most likely would abhor you
If they could not feel sorry for you."

This, like all Fables, is designed
To titillate the childish mind.
The Author has no subtle views
On Galliwampuses or Gnus,
Nor does he hold a Ph.D.
In Gyascutus-ology.
He simply hopes he has been able
To demonstrate that, in a Fable,
If you write interesting patter,
The Animals you use don't matter.

* * *

FABLE OF THE OX WHO LOST HIS PATIENCE

Of all the beasts and all the birds
That go in coveys, roam in herds,
That hunt in packs or graze in flocks,
The least impatient is the Ox.
He cherishes no bitter hates,
But does his work, and ruminates;
He has no flair for cutting capers
Or writing letters to the papers
Relating to the working class
And signed "A Friend," or "Veritas."
He is not radical when broke,
And at all times can take a Yoke.
The ne plus ultra type is he
Of a Contented Bourgeoisie.
You never hear of Oxen shooting
At Public Men, or revoluting,
Or ringing of the Town Hall bell,
Or generally raising Hell;
You never heard of any Ox
Wearing *le dernier cri* in socks.

I knew an Ox of whom 'twas said
No flaunting rag, however red,
No insult and no provocation
Could goad him to exasperation.
Not even a malicious rumor
That he possessed no Sense of Humor
Could rouse resentment in his breast—
Which is, dear friends, the Acid Test.

No trouble-maker he, no ranter—
Ah me, how *tempora mutantur!*

His acts we should condone, not blame . . .
One day a Census-Taker came
To question him, to vex and hector,
And then, an Income-Tax-Collector,
Who made the Ox explain each cent
That he had made, that he had spent,
And held him with a glittering eye,
And asked him When, and Where, and Why.
The morning mail increased his cares,
For it was full of Questionnaires.
(We have become, it seems to me,
A Questionnairistocracy.)
"Do you believe there is a Soul?"
"How do you stand on Birth Control?"
"What is your greatest Aim in Life?"
"How often do you beat your wife?"
"Please answer Questions A and B."
"Do you take lemon in your tea?"
The Ox, with these and many more,
Became less patient than before,
Yet, even when the Public Smeller
Came to investigate his Cellar,
His native calmness and urbanity
Kept him from uttering profanity.
He may have grumbled, but his mien
Was more than usually serene.

A Senator from Arkansaw
Meantime was working on a Law
Designed to set the nation free
From any taint of privacy.

It was the final word in Laws,
Containing as it did a clause
Condemning to a felon's cell
Each citizen who would not tell
The local Grand Inquisitor
What he had dreamed the night before.
The hounds of Uplift were unloosed,
And, when the Bill was introduced,
Though Press and Public joined to blast it,
The House and Senate promptly passed it.

One morning, as the patient Ox
Was trafficking in bonds and stocks,
A gendarme summoned him before
The local Grand Inquisitor,
Who said: "Put down, in black and white,
The things you dreamed about last night,
Howe'er fantastical or checkered—
We need them for the public record."
Without a word, without a sound,
The Ox began to paw the ground,
His temperature began to rise,
And Patience vanished from his eyes.
Inhaling till his lungs were full,
He bellowed: "Gangway! I'm a Bull!"
He lashed his tail, he arched his neck,
He left that office in a wreck,
And dashed defiant through the town
Until the Butcher cut him down.

From this sad incident we learn
That, pushed too far, an Ox will turn;
And if therein you find no Moral,
It doesn't matter—let's not quarrel.

* * *

FIRST PRIZE, A SHETLAND PONY

Some four-eyed exploitation engineer in a syndicate office in New York started all the trouble. His twelve-cylinder brain harbored a notion, probably a relic of his boyhood reading of the *Youth's Companion*, that no child is happy unless it has a Shetland pony. It is most unlikely that this syndicate Solomon had ever seen a Shetland pony, or that he would have known the fetlock from the pancreas if he had seen one. But it was perfectly evident that he thought of childhood's happy hours in terms of Shetland ponies. A psychoanalyst might have found a repression. It is also quite likely that a phrenologist would have found a depression. The most charitable thing to say about the man is that he must have been kicked in the head by a horse when young.

What he did was ruin several thousand American homes by offering a Shetland pony as first prize in a letter-writing contest. The letters were to be addressed to Little Sammy Simp, the juvenile hero of that great Sunday comic page, The Simp Family. To be exact, not one Shetland pony, but a couple of hundred, lured the youth of the nation to epistolary excesses, because every paper that used the Simp feature had to make good.

Our paper fell for it, because it was practically compulsory, and, anyway, the Simps is a big feature and means circulation. And the children fell for it, because if there is one thing the little darlings love more than another, it is writing cute letters for prizes. Letters to Little Sammy Simp poured in at such a rate that the mailman sent them up to the Sunday editor in the freight elevator.

Having been a Sunday editor for a number of years, this

wage-slave of a debased journalism knew how to handle prize letter contests. There was a vacant room back of the elevator where the girls from the society department used to go to smoke cigarettes before women became emancipated and emaciated. He tossed all the letters in there as fast as they came, and when it was time to decide the contest he reached in and pulled one out. Then he called up the father of the girl whose name was on the letter and told him his offspring had won a Shetland pony.

The father said "My God," and threatened to stop the paper unless the matter was hushed up. So the Sunday editor went back to the pile and pulled out another letter.

This time he called up the mother of the talented child. She made no pious ejaculation, but came right down to the office and cried for quite a while. How she did want her little Edgar to have a Shetland pony—as a child she had always wanted one, but in vain—and it broke her heart, it just broke her boo-hoo heart, but they lived in an apartment, and the landlord was most unreasonable, and couldn't the Sunday editor make it a saxophone? (Sniff.)

The Sunday editor poured her out of the office, and swore eleven and a half columns of leaded pica. He saw, by this time, what he was up against. In his mind's eye, Horatio, he saw himself leading a Shetland pony around through a strictly urban, not to say motorized constituency, begging children to take the thing off his hands.

After he had got himself calmed down, he realized that there was a way out, possibly with honor. Back to the roomful of letters he went, and presently discovered a missive with an R. F. D. address. He felt a lot better right away. Here was a child who lived in the country, far from the madding apartment houses, all set and ready to be made happy by a Shetland pony. He wrote the little girl a nice chatty letter about her great good fortune and begged her to call and close the deal.

The little girl did not come, but her father and mother did. The father was a Baptist minister with a cowlick who had tired of reaping tares from the rocky fields of unappreciative charges, and was trying his hand at reaping alfalfa on a suburban farm development project. His wife was a lady who knew what she wanted, and looked you in the eye. She had the better pulpit voice of the two, and was a long way from being the weaker vessel. She sat between the Sunday editor and the door, and wanted to know what the catch was.

The Sunday editor threw away his cigarette and explained that he was the unworthy agent of a great family journal in a purely philanthropic enterprise.

"You actually want to give me a Shetland pony?" demanded the lady. Her husband continued to be the silent partner.

"We want to give your daughter a Shetland pony," said the Sunday editor.

"It's the same thing," said the lady. "Don't we have to subscribe for three years, or something?"

"It will cost you nothing whatever."

"You give a saddle and bridle with the pony, of course."

"No, madam, just the pony."

The lady gave her husband and the Sunday editor a dirty look apiece. "Well," she said, "I suppose we have to take it."

"Thank you so much," said the Sunday editor.

It then became necessary to procure a Shetland pony. After the ex-minister and his manager had left, the Sunday editor explained the situation to his immediate superior, the acting-deputy-vice-protempore-sub-managing editor, who has a detached, philosophical point of view and takes everything calmly.

"You have had enough grief in this matter," said the acting-and-so-forth managing editor. "I will take it off your hands from now on." Whereupon the Sunday editor resumed the practice of journalism, told the janitor what to do with the

roomful of letters, and put the Shetland ponies and Little Sammy Simp out of his life.

But the next day, when he came to work, the ex-minister and his wife were there, waiting for him. The ex-minister was still meek enough to inherit the earth, but his wife was in the Jeremiah mood. "The pony," she said, "that you sent us is not a Shetland pony."

"But, madam——"

"It is not even a pony. It is a horse." She called her husband to the witness stand. "Isn't it a horse?"

"Yes, my dear," said the reaper of tares.

The Sunday editor sighed, and led the indignant prize-winners to the office of his immediate superior, the acting managing editor. Then he took his hat and went to the ball game.

The acting managing editor was sweetly diplomatic. Real Shetland ponies, he pointed out, as one who had been, you might say, raised among Shetland ponies, are notoriously unreliable and bad tempered. Especially are they averse to children. Often they kick, and frequently bite their little masters and mistresses. In some places it is against the law to keep or harbor a Shetland pony.

"This pony we sent you," he said, "is known to be gentle and fond of children. And if, as you say, he is a little larger than some ponies, think what a help he will be with the farm work."

And much more of the same. It seemed to work. The Little Minister almost beamed, and She-Who-Must-Be-Obeyed did not have as much to say as before.

"It was very simple and easy," said the acting managing editor to the Sunday editor later on. "These constant readers are tough babies sometimes, but a little diplomacy gets them. Take my word for it, there will be no more monkey business about the pony."

The Sunday editor yessed him, but retained his private

doubts. He was not an optimistic fellow. All his life he had expected the breaks to go against him, and he had seldom been disappointed. The pony imbroglio looked to him as though it had been hatched under an evil star, and he did not see how the affair could possibly have a happy ending. He went into the silences and waited for the bad news to begin to arrive.

It arrived, all right. Not more than two days after the acting managing editor had spread banana oil on the troubled waters, the first bulletin came by phone. Little Elaine, the prize-winning offspring, had been run away with by the pony, and had suffered contusions and abrasions. And what did the paper propose to do about it? The Sunday editor switched the call to his immediate superior, took his hat and went to a movie.

The thing was patched up by more diplomacy, and for almost a week there was peace. But the next bulletin was more disturbing and Madam Minister's tone of voice distinctly more hostile. Discarded as a pet and sentenced to menial servitude, the poisonous pony had been hitched to the manure wagon and told to giddap. Instead of giddapping, he had promptly kicked the pastoral pastor right out of the manure wagon. More contusions. Infinitely more abrasions. Also a wrenched knee, and the lady would be in right away for a personal conference.

The Sunday editor reported, and said he was sorry he could not stay for the conference, but had promised to meet a man.

"For the present," said the acting managing editor, "you will not see any man. You will stay here as assistant diplomat, and in the meantime for God's sake think of something."

The Sunday editor thought, and found himself face to face with the inevitable. Then he reported to headquarters, outlined a plan, took his hat and waited behind a pillar in the lobby down stairs. He saw Mrs. Nemesis arrive with Exhibits A and B, that is to say, the slightly abraded prize-winning

child and the limping agriculturist. As they got into the elevator, the Sunday editor went out and started his Ford town car.

Up in the managing editor's office sympathy spread her healing wings. The acting M. E. was broken hearted that such a thing should have happened. Never, in a thousand years, would his great family paper have willingly committed equestrian assault on so valued a customer. No, there was no necessity of suggesting a lawsuit. All wrongs should be righted, that the proud escutcheon of the Simp Family, that aristocrat of the comics, remain untarnished.

"All that we ask," he said, "is that you return the pony, in good condition. Bring him back to the stable where you got him, take a receipt from the stableman, who is our accredited representative in this matter, and we will make every effort to find you a steed that is suitable in every way."

The handsomeness of the offer, accompanied as it was by a handful of matinee passes, could not be denied or resisted. And that was the last we saw around the office of the lucky prize winners.

Quite late that evening the Sunday editor made his final report. He looked tired, but not as unhappy as usual. "I guess," he said, "they won't be bringing the pony back. Some fiend in human form stole him this afternoon while the family was away. My personal opinion is that the guilty person belonged to a band of Indians headed north for the salmon running."

"Well," said the acting managing editor, "that's too bad."

"Isn't it? And, chief, they were right about that being a mean pony."

"What makes you think so?"

"He bit me twice," said the Sunday editor.

MRS. BROWN AND THE FAMOUS AUTHOR

There was no lady more refined,
More fond of Art of every kind,
In all our highly cultured town
Than Mrs. Andalusia Brown.
A perfect paragon was she
At having Poets in for tea.
The tea was weak, but she was strong
For having "Ung petit salong,"
And if no poet came her way,
She sought out other kinds of prey,
(Two actors in a week was bogey)
And once she hooked a Hindu Yogi!
Her parties, in their modest way,
Were altogether *récherché,*
And presently achieved such fame
That even Husbands sometimes came
Entirely of their own accord
And were not noticeably bored.
No person of the least renown
Was overlooked by Mrs. Brown;
Their efforts to escape were vain,
Because she met them at the train.
I'll say, however, to her credit,
She took each Lion home and fed it,
And when one is both fed and starred,
One does not struggle very hard.

One summer, by a happy chance,
There came an Author fresh from France,

Where he had dwelt for quite a while
Because New Jersey cramped his style.
He was a leader of the *monde*
Frequenting the Café Rotonde
(A Paris place where one may find
Great Geniuses of every kind).
He wore an eyeglass and a beard
And was enormously revered
By all the young and exiled writers
To whom Americans are blighters.
Although excluded from the mail
His books had no substantial sale,
But managed to achieve renown
Through being printed upside down.
One read them standing on one's head—
"A daring step!" the critics said.

This famous Author came to town,
As I have said, and Mrs. Brown,
Of course, invited him to tea
To meet her Little Coterie,
And he, at the right time, appeared,
Wearing his eyeglass and his beard,
And had his tea, and undertook
Some excerpts from his latest book
(Though he neglected, be it said,
To read them standing on his head,
To the chagrin, if not despair
Of several ladies who were there).
The ladies scarcely got a thrill
From their celebrity, until
In a clear, penetrating voice
He read some extracts from J-m-s J-yce,
Containing now and then a Word

That should be neither seen nor heard.
They were too startled to applaud;
A Husband near the door guffawed,
And choked, and realized in terror
That he had made a Social Error.
On went the Author, and more choice
Became the excerpts from J-m-s J-yce,
That eminent, acknowledged Master.
The horrid Words came thicker, faster,
And in a silence like the tomb
The Husband rose and left the room
And rolled and chortled on the lawn,
But no one knew that he had gone.

The famous Author fresh from France
Concluded, and a sort of trance
Possessed the ladies who belong
To Mrs. Brown's "petit Salong."
They had been looking at their laps
Intently; now they got their wraps,
And could not think of things to say,
But said good-bye, and went away.
En masse the Author they forsook
And said no word about his book.
They were not shocked or grieved or harassed—
They were just naturally embarrassed.

It was most hard on Mrs. Brown,
Because the story swept the town.
(The solitary Husband's version
Accelerated its dispersion.)
Refined but lively was the glee
Of every rival Coterie,
And now poor Mrs. Brown is shy

Of Lions who are passing by;
She does not meet them at the train,
Her teas are on a different plane,
Much less advanced, and more subdued,
For now, as complement to food,
The hostess reads, with gentle zest,
The poetry of Edg-r Gu-st.

TALE OF THE AUTHOR AND HIS ART

An Author, typical and recent,
A self-respecting man, and decent,
The weight of destitution bore,
With *Canis Lupus* at the door.
He patronized the worst of cooks
Because he was so poor. His books
Were both erotic and erratic,
Yet he was living in an attic,
Which proves the wisdom of the song:
"The more you write, the more you're wrong."
It will most clearly illustrate
The direness of his need to state
He could not, such was his distress,
Subscribe for clippings from the press.
(An Author's purse is really flat
When he becomes as poor as that.)

This Author was a soul apart,
And would not prostitute his Art.
He would not pen bromidic scenes
And sell them to the magazines,
Or dash off ads for soaps and lards,
Or "sentiments" for birthday cards;
He would not truckle to the editors,
Not even to appease his creditors,
In fact, his standards were so high,
Even the critics passed him by,
Except the esoteric few
Of the Intransigent Review,

Who never pay the slightest heed
To books that common people read.

The Author, though, for such is life,
After a time, acquired a wife,
Whose smiles were sweet, whose eyes were blue,
Who said an attic would not do.
His heart was torn as by a vulture
By the demands of fiscal culture,
And by the need of making money
With which to domicile his Honey.

It is an axiom, or saw,
That matrimony knows no law,
That there is but one course to choose
When Sweetie needs a pair of shoes,
And, under economic stress,
What is one Author more or less?
Our Auther struggled, but in vain—
His standards cracked beneath the strain.

Today, no longer poor, he writes
Of midnight trysts and border fights,
He fills the pages of his books
With super-intellectual crooks,
His stuff is snappy, brisk and clean,
He turns it out like a machine,
Against all canons it rebels,
But gracious heaven, how it sells!
He lives in luxury and style
And spends his winters on the Nile,
And sends large yearly contributions
To Needy Authors' institutions.
Of no reward has Fate bereft him—
His wife? Oh, I forgot.
She left him.

THE RISE AND FALL OF PROFESSOR QUILL

Professor Van Devanter Quill
Was born at Middlesbury, Ill.,
Had measles at the age of four,
Worked summers in a grocery store,
Was educated, first at home,
Then at New Haven, Oxford, Rome,
Bonn, Heidelberg, and Paris, France.
His parents gave him every chance.
(They also gave him every dollar.)
He was a very noted scholar
And had as many Ph.D.'s,
And so forth, as a dog has fleas—
Success came to him by degrees.

In the course of time, Professor Quill
Was called, as scholars say, to fill
The very most important chair
That had been founded, anywhere.
The Chair of which he was possessor
Made him at once a full Professor,
With one year off in every seven—
The educator's dream of Heaven—
And full permission to approach,
On equal terms, the Football Coach!
He also got, entirely clear,
Five thousand dollars every year.
His colleagues spoke of him with pride
That was entirely justified,
Seeing that Doctor Quill knew more

Than anyone (save three or four),
About the last conclusive datum
Concerning the elusive Atom.
He had with diligence and care
Pursued the Atom to its lair
And studied all its gentle ways
Through studious nights and busy days.
Great scholars sent for him to show them
His stuff on "Atoms, How To Know Them,"
His lectures were so very deep
They gave tired students restful sleep—
Which, as you know who've been to college,
Is harder to acquire than knowledge.

How lofty are the peaks of Fame!
One day a greater honor came,
Imparting an unwonted thrill
To Doctor Van Devanter Quill.
In brief, it was an invitation
For him to give a speech, oration,
Talk, thesis, paper or address
On "Atoms and Their Usefulness"
At the biennial convention
Of Fellows of the Fourth Dimension—
A group of Scientists so great
In all the world there were but eight.
The things they talked of when they met
No lesser men have mastered, yet.

This added real *noblesse oblige*
To Quill's professional prestige.
His laboratory's steady light
Burned on, far on, into the night;
The Atom's chances, they were slim,

No secret, now, was safe from him!
He worked them singly and in groups,
He had them jumping through the hoops,
And learned about the little elves
More than the Atoms knew, themselves!

Came the biennial convention
Of Brothers of the Fourth Dimension,
Likewise, obedient to the call,
Came the great Eight, and hired a hall,
And listened, critical and still,
To Doctor Van Devanter Quill,
The Aristotle of the Atom.
Now, the one prime desideratum
In giving birth to an Address
Is being quoted in the Press,
Which, though it gives too little space
To news of moment to the Race,
Can be induced, at certain times
To mention other things than Crimes.
Some Journalists, of good intentions,
And much experience of Conventions
Were present, though against their will,
To listen to Professor Quill.
Lately, although it seems absurd,
No lively murders had occurred,
No mysteries demanded clues,
No Divorcées provided news,
And so the epochal address
Got full attention from the Press.
The Journalists fulfilled their missions
And left to catch the Late Editions.
In rather a bewildered way
They asked each other: "What'd he say?"

And answered, very much at sea:
"My Gawd, Jack Dalton, don't ask ME!"

Next day Professor Quill sat down
With all the papers of the town
Hoping to find no gross erratum
In their discussion of the Atom.
The first black headline wrecked his poise—
Its words were "Up and Atom, Boys!"
The next intensified the wreck—
It said "Savant Shows Atoms Neck!"
Then "Quill Denounces Universe"—
And so it went, from bad to worse.
Professor Quill, I grieve to say,
Aged noticeably in a day,
And in the one proverbial night
His hair, what there was left, turned white.
Since then his mind has not been strong—
He talks in headlines all day long.

The fellow came into the office, reached for the matches, and said:

"The situation in China is intensely interesting."

Interesting, I said, was a mild adjective. Enthralling would be more like it. And what did he think of the situation in Lower Abyssinia?

This fellow was not of the type that can be sidetracked. It was China or nothing with him, with heavy odds on China. I saw at once that I would have to fight it out on the Chinese line, also that it would probably take all summer, as did General Grant.

He drew up a chair and sat down. Worse, he took a map out of his pocket. "How do you size it up?" he asked me, not really wanting to know.

I said I had been having just a little trouble keeping the details straight in my mind.

"Let me explain it to you," he said. "It's all very simple."

Undoubtedly it was, I admitted.

"In the first place," he began, taking some more matches, "you must not confuse Chiang Kai Shek with Chang Tso Lin."

I said I would do my best.

"Chiang Kai Shek, you see, is the military leader of the Kuomintang. He controls Hankow, Nanking and Chiantang. Chang Tso Lin, on the other hand, assisted by Chang Tsung Chang, Sun Chuan Fang and a few others whose names I won't mention, is defending the line of Shanghai, Tientsin and points north. Now the weakness of the Kuomintang lies in the fact that Feng Yu Hsiang claims that Wu Pei Fu and Tsao

Kun are secretly in sympathy with Tsun Chang and Chang Tso Lin. Do you follow me?"

"Chang," I said, although I really had intended to say yes.

"Stop me if you've heard this," said my enlightener. "It is perfectly simple, or would be if it were not for the fact that the Hip Sing tong controls the bridgehead at Fe Fi Fo Fum, and is secretly negotiating with Chang Tso Lin for a moratorium. But the On Leong tong, led by Sun Chuan Fang, is coming down the Whangpoo and is apparently about to pung number seven bamboo, if not, indeed, to chow number three circle, thereby giving the Kuomintang both mah jong and chow mein——"

I interrupted him here. "I think," I said, "it would be a bit clearer if you were to show it to me on the map."

That pleased him a lot, because it showed that I was interested. Not that he needed encouragement. He spread the map on the desk and borrowed a pencil.

"I've been over there," he said, "and I know the country pretty well. You want to remember that the Yang Tse Kiang, while it is the largest Chinese river, does not compare with the Tung How Kiang in strategical importance. The Tung How Kiang, you see, flows through the Pe Tsai basin, which produces huge quantities of chung. Do you know what chung is?"

I said I wasn't sure. These different Chinese dialects are so confusing—Confucius—confusious—Cunfucing—it made a little tune, and my mind wandered. But I heard him say:

"Why, chung is Chinese for rice. It's their principal food, you know."

I said I always thought chow was food.

"That's pidgin-English." He seemed a little severe. "Let's get back to where we were. As I was about to point out, if the Kuomintang gets control of the Tung How Kiang, and with it of the Pe Tsai basin, then it will be merely a question

of whether the Yen Hok wing or the Yen Shee wing will dominate the Kuomintang itself. And that's all there is to it."

He folded the map and put it back in his pocket. He also put my pencil in his pocket. The matches were already there.

"Is there anything," he asked, "that I haven't made clear?"

"Just one thing," I said very meekly and gently, "perhaps I should have asked you before. What did I understand you to say is going on in China? Is it a war, or something?"

I do not know when I have seen a man look more disappointed. Besides being disappointed he was also plainly annoyed. I did not quite catch what he said as he went out the door, but it sounded something like a Chinese general.

Adam named the animals, with some practical assistance, no doubt, from Eve. And a very good job he made of it.

It is true that the guinea pig is not a pig and did not come from Guinea, but Adam had no way of knowing that. None of us would have been likely to do much better with that particular animal. It certainly looks like a guinea pig, and acts like one, if all the stories are true. It is significant that when Noah, some years after Adam, took an inventory of the animal kingdom, he found no occasion for changing any of the names, though his spelling was a little peculiar in some cases.

But Adam cannot be blamed for the custom of naming waterfalls Bridal Veil, and he certainly had nothing to do with the practice of naming majestic mountain peaks after Civil War generals and members of Congress. Adam and his wife are blamed for enough things as it is, and a little vindication will do them no harm, even at this late date.

Something ought to be done, however, to fix the blame for some very poor jobs of naming, and particularly for a terrible mixup that occurred at some point in the history of nomenclature. The mixup I mean is the one that left a lot of pretty flowers named after diseases, and an equal number of diseases with unmistakably floral names. Adam would never have allowed that to happen, and neither would any other first-class namer, such as the Pullman car man or the one who thinks up the names for the French perfumes.

With the evidence we have, it is easy to reconstruct the situation. At one time or another the guilty party, whoever he was, or the guilty parties, whoever they were—for some of the most celebrated boners of history have been pulled by

committees and Boards—had a big batch of flowers to name and a big batch of newly discovered ailments, all at the same time. Let us be charitable and assume that it was a rush job. The lists got shuffled, and by the time the mistake was discovered, it was too late to do anything about it.

Scabiosa, for instance, is obviously the name of a disease. If you were to come across the word without having seen it before, there would be no doubt about it. Just as obviously, Acne Rosacea is the name of a flower, and an exceptionally beautiful and hardy flower, at that. Take our old friend, Halitosis, that has blighted so many lives and been responsible for so many permanent bridesmaids. It is as clear as anything can be that when that name was invented, it was meant to be given to a graceful, climbing shrub. On the other hand, Salpiglossis, before the lists got mixed, was a slow, lingering malady, the kind that people are always being cured of by Chinese herb doctors. Primula is a flower and Scrofula isn't, but not by any process of logic.

To the superficial reader, there would seem to be nothing wrong in an account of somebody dying of coreopsis and asking, as his last request, that nothing but neuralgia be planted on his grave. It is always a shock to find that gypsophila, which sounds delightfully psychopathic, is vulgarly but poetically baby's breath and a treasure of old-fashioned gardens.

Once I knew a doctor who was also a zealous horticulturist, and he admitted that it was hard for him to keep the names straight. He was always, he said, in mortal fear lest he should tell a patient she had acute pyrethrum, and come to the office with a zymosis in his button-hole.

ART IN THE DESERT

America's backwardness in art is due to prohibition.—*Joseph Pennell in "Adventures of an Illustrator."*

. . . . . .

Bacchus was ever Art's most faithful slave;
Now he is gone, in vain the painter toils—
Once we had Venus, rising from the wave,
As large as life, painted by hand in oils,
The shrine of connoisseurs from near and far,
On the south wall of Louie Schmaltz's bar.

And, beside Venus, a whole tribe of nymphs,
Languishing in the greenwood, ripely pink,
In need of no rejuvenating lymphs,
Admired by all who could afford a drink.
Where are they now? Nobody seems to know.
Their beauty vanished with the winter's snow.

And where have fled the artists who of yore
Traced esoteric, intricate designs
Upon the mirror opposite the door
Of Joe Petroskey, Ales, Cigars and Wines?
Driven to exile with the golden lads
Who in the spring created bock beer ads!

There are no pictures in this arid day
Like the rich masterpieces that were hung
Above the free lunch stand at Mike's Buffet
In that Arcadian age when we were young.
The Muses languish for the lack of rum,
Great Pan is dead.
And Art is on the bum.

THE NON-VANISHING RACE

I always cast a jaundiced eye, and occasionally a myopic one, at published figures that purport to show that the North American Indian, instead of being a vanishing race, is numerically on the upgrade. What makes my eye jaundiced or myopic in a case of that kind is that I always wonder how much of the increase that the figures show is the result of "adopting" white people into the various Indian tribes. The question is, are "adopted" Indians counted by the statisticians? If they are, it is an offense against ethnology. If they are not, it is an affront to the chief industry of the North American Indian.

This adoption business started about the time that Indians quit standing in front of cigar stores and began to collect royalties from Oklahoma oil wells. The adoption ceremony is a cross between a Kickapoo Sagwa Root medicine show and the pageant given to celebrate the opening of the new toll bridge across the Scappoose river. When it is conducted in the Indian language, it gives the noble red men a fine chance to express their opinions of the white race in general and of the adoptee in particular. The Indian has had a dirty deal from the conquering Nordic, and the Indian never forgets or forgives.

The first essential ingredient for an Indian adoption ceremony is a Caucasian celebrity. If it is a visiting European celebrity, all the better, because then anything goes. The second ingredient is plenty of photographers. There is another item, namely, Indians, but you can always get Indians.

Whoever is running the show tells the Indians what he wants. Then the head Indian says, "You got any canned heat?"

Canned heat is solidified alcohol, and Indians use it in their quaint aboriginal arts and crafts. This query prolongs the negotiations somewhat, but by the time the celebrity arrives everything has been settled and some fine war bonnets and beaded buckskin suits have arrived from the nearest costumer. Also, the trap drummer of the local dance orchestra has lent his Indian tomtom.

When the photographers are ready, the Indians come out of their tepees (courtesy of the Hi-Art Film Corp.), and do their sacred dance of the Thunder Eagle. This is the part where they need the tomtom. In the last year or so, the sacred dance of the Thunder Eagle has contained several steps faintly reminiscent of the Black Bottom, at which the noble Siwashes of this decadent age are, in their hours of relaxation from the rigors of the hunt, more proficient than one would think.

After the dance, the tribe forms in a semi-circle and Chief Moose-on-the-Mountain steps forward. He is not an hereditary chief, but more of a *de facto* one, as you might say. He happened to be the right size to wear the handsomest of the costumes. He turns to his tribe and says, in their own language: "All right, now give 'em the works."

The interpreter turns to the celebrity and the photographer and translates:

"He says the great white chief is welcome."

The tribe chants, in chorus, "Bushwa, bushwa," which, according to the interpreter, means, "Hail, hail!"

Chief Moose-on-the-Mountain proceeds to relate, in the tribal dialect, a humorous anecdote he heard the day before from a stage driver on the reservation.

The interpreter then holds forth as follows:

"Great white chief, the Blackhead Indians greet you. We welcome you to our tribal fires, which burn beneath the western stars, beside tall mountains, in the midst of running

waters. We would have you one of us. Henceforth you are a Blackhead, as we are, and your name is Musko-wosko, which in the tongue of the paleface means Prancing Pony. Hiyu-skookum! The chief has spoken."

That ends the ceremony as far as the Indians are concerned, but the photographers still have a day's work ahead of them.

Only one drawback so far has been discovered to the picturesque procedure of adopting white celebrities into our Indian tribes. That is that redskins by adoption have not as yet been able to qualify for land allotments in oil-producing districts. Maybe Congress will be able to work that out.

THE SIFTING PROCESS

A lot of us loyal alumni have been getting our heads together, and not for musical reasons, either. We have been trying to think up some solution for the latest crisis that confronts our respective *almæ matres*. It is a different sort of crisis from the kind we have been used to, which makes it harder.

No alumnus who is worth his Attic salt *(sel Atticus-a-um)* confines his efforts in behalf of the old 'varsity to attending football games, endowment dinners and similar revels. He finds out what the needs of the college are, and works like blazes to supply them.

What all the colleges used to need was more students. The more students, the better college. The conscientious alumnus's permanent assignment was to round up bright young prep school men and get them headed the right way. If they could punt or pole vault, so much the better. But mere students counted, too.

When the colleges began to get exclusive it meant a new deal all around. We had to change our whole plan of campaign. After the war, everybody began to go to college, and congestion set in. The principal college problem became, not how to get them in, but how to keep them out. At the same time, none of the right sort of men were to be kept out, and that, you may believe, was a poser. We must get the right sort in, and keep the wrong sort out, and there was your crisis.

It was a serious matter, and we went at it in a serious way. We held a number of meetings, went to considerable expense for refreshments and breakage, and discussed the matter with our customary thoroughness. The upshot of it was that we

prepared three solutions, or plans, for what we have tactfully termed selective enrollment, and are getting them in shape so that any college needing help along this line can have it free of charge. Here they are in tabloid form:

I. The Quota Plan. We borrowed this idea from the popular and successful federal immigration code which is doing so much to build up cordial international relations. Each college would divide prospective students into classes and would accept only a fixed percentage of each class. As, for instance, 11 per cent of Smiths (including Smyths and Smythes), 58 per cent of halfbacks, 3 per cent of second tenors, 19 per cent of sons of graduates prior to the class of '98.

II. The City Club Plan. To be eligible for admission, a prospective student would have to be proposed by an alumnus in good standing and seconded by at least two others. A Committee on Admissions, to consist of the Dean, the head coach of each of the major sports, and the Oldest Living Graduate, would act on all applications. If the college is co-educational, the committee would have to include Mr. Florenz Ziegfeld.

III. The Questionnaire Plan. All entrance examinations, I.Q. tests and so forth would be scrapped, and applicants rated on their reactions to ask-me-another lists. From the various quiz books on the market a special list of 100 questions would be taken, and applicants given all the time they want to guess the answers, which would *not* be printed in the back of the book. Anyone scoring 100 per cent would be dropped on the ground that he must have cheated. Grades of 90 or over would also bring rejection, as they would be a clear indication of a misspent youth. Anyone making from 70 to 90 would be admitted on probation. Grades below 70 would gain instant and unconditional admission, because anybody who can not score 70 *needs* an education.

DO IT NOW!

If you want to sell suspenders or convert a heathen race,
Get a slogan!
If you have a plan to beautify the nation or the face,
Get a slogan!
You may be sincere and honest, you may vow to win or bust,
You may be quite unaccustomed to take anybody's dust,
But however great your virtues, it is written that you must
Get a slogan!

If the outfit that you work for wants to perpetrate a "Week,"
Get a slogan!
If you think that kindergartens should teach horseshoeing
and Greek,
Get a slogan!
Any scheme you have to purify our sausage or our plays
Has got to be distinguished by a single snappy phrase;
It rouses public consciousness, and then, you know, it pays—
Get a slogan!

Should your own invention fail you, it's correct to give a prize
For a slogan.
It's an inexpensive method of attracting people's eyes,
Buy a slogan!
There will be a million letters in your swift and certain grist,
You could chuck them in the river, and they never would be
missed,
But you'll find before you've finished, that you own a mailing
list—
Get a slogan!

If you have a panacea for calamities or corns,
Get a slogan!
If you think the legislature should abolish auto horns,
Get a slogan!
If you want to be a person who is wealthy and admired,
If position in the limelight is the thing you've most desired,
And, you bally, bounding blighter, if you want to make me
tired—
Get a slogan!

LOUDER AND SADDER

The trouble with poetry in the United States is that it is next to impossible to get good obituary poems, even when you are willing to pay for them. This is not a statement of academic theory, but a plain and poignant fact. I have it straight from an eminent mortician, a big hearse-and-coffin man from the west, who, as he told me about it, came as near to crying as a mortician ever comes. A good mortician, in his professional moments, always looks as though he were about to cry, but of course he never does. This man was so near the ultimate expression of grief that in his eye I saw the penumbra of a tear. If he had worn a tall hat, as undertakers used to do before they became morticians, I am sure he would have cried into it.

"You are a writing man," he said to me, "and maybe you can tell why the best writers do not write obituary poetry."

I said that the best writers, as far as I could make out, are too busy writing advertisements for articles of commerce that used never to be mentioned in the best society. It is a fact that all my favorite writers are doing that sort of work. I do not know their names, but they are wonderful. There is a delicacy and a reticence about their style that ought to make novelists and dramatists ashamed of themselves.

I asked him what the matter was with the visible supply. He fished in a vest pocket and brought out a couple of clippings. "Read those," he said. "They will give you an idea of what we have to put up with."

I read the verses. One of them was:

> Shall claim of death cause us to grieve
> And make our courage faint or fall?

Nay, let us faith and hope receive,
Our loved one grows beyond the wall.

The other verse went thus:

The rolling stream of life rolls on,
But still the vacant chair
Recalls the love, the voice, the smile,
Of the one who once sat there.

"And those," said the mournful mortician, "are supposed to be the very topnotch of obituary poetry. We get them from a literary concern in St. Louis. You'd think, wouldn't you, that in a big place like St. Louis there ought to be clever writers who could do better than that. Honestly, when a client asks for some verses to have printed in the paper, most of the time I just say we haven't got anything."

"Probably," I said, "the average client wouldn't know that it is bad poetry."

"Probably not," said he, "but I'm conscientious. I advertise 'Complete Service to the Bereaved,' and as long as I can't furnish good obituary poetry my conscience tells me the service isn't really complete. Nothing but the best, has always been my principle."

"But the best writers," I said, "do write a lot of poetry that is full of sadness. Death is a popular subject, especially with the younger poets."

"I know," he said, "I've read it. But it hasn't got the personal touch. It wouldn't make my client feel as if it were meant especially for him. The kind of poetry our profession wants—and is willing to pay well for—is the kind you see on greeting cards. That's high class stuff. Birthday cards, Mother's Day cards, cards to the parents of a new baby, cards to a friend in the hospital—you know the sort of thing I mean. It's awfully well done. Must be good writers doing

it. And I'll bet they get pleasure out of knowing their verses are making people happy. They've got the personal touch, all right. I'll tell you," he went on, "talk it up a bit. You know a lot of writers; put it up to them, see what their reaction is. There's money in it, and, besides, you've no idea how a good obituary poem will cheer people up. It makes them cry, and they feel better right away. Do what you can, will you?"

His own tears, I could see, were very near the surface, so I said certainly, and added that some day I might try my hand at it myself. After he had gone, I wrote to the Poetry Society of America and to several of the magazines that give practical hints to struggling authors. Not that I expect any immediate results.

THE TWO-PANTS SUIT CONSPIRACY

If women ruled this country, and I dare say they do, every man not otherwise engaged would be wearing a two-pants suit. This may sound like a startling statement. It is meant to be. It has all the ear-marks and it makes as much sense as most startling statements. If Dean Inge had said it, it would be even more. It would, in that case, be a Sensational Utterance, and a great many editorials would be written about it. And if Nietzsche had said it, there is no telling how many people would believe it. People who have never read a word of Nietzsche believe every word he ever wrote. Nietzsche-fakers, that is what they are.

Just the same, there is a lot of truth in what I was saying about two-pants suits. It is a hard subject to write about, because the term itself is vulgar. No good essayist uses the word pants. No good essayist even wears pants. Still, it is obviously out of the question to speak of two-trouser suits. That sounds snooty, and to be snooty is every bit as bad as to be vulgar. You do not find the merchant princes who have two-pants suits for sale advertising them as two-trouser suits. They have their fingers on the great throbbing pulse of the people, and they know they would not sell any suits that way. They make everything short and snappy, and will sell you, if possible, not only a 2-pants suit but also a tux and some sox.

About the women and their part in the two-pants suit conspiracy. The facts, as I see them, are plain—so plain that they could hardly escape the notice even of a congressional investigating committee. They should, in fact, be brought to the attention of a congressional investigation committee. When they were young, many congressmen wore patched trousers,

and later got elected more or less on the strength of it. If they had had to wear two-pants suits they would never have needed patches, and where would they be today? For that matter, where are they today?

Getting back to the women. By women, of course, I mean wives. Statistics show that nearly all women are wives. Even if statistics did not show this, it would be true just the same. There are a great many important facts that cannot be put into statistics or shown in the form of graphs. For instance, when I say that most wives buy their husbands' clothes, that is something that cannot be laid end to end or compared with the Woolworth building, but it is true, and everybody knows it.

Now we are ready for the syllogism. Major premise: Wives buy their husbands' clothes. Minor premise: Wives have a yen for two-pants suits. Conclusion: It takes nine tailors to make a man (Old English proverb).

To make the matter a little more clear, let us say that there are two kinds of wives. Mathematically, this is not so. The last census report shows that there are 167 and a fraction kinds of wives, using the ordinary botanical classifications, but this is purely technical and has no place in belles lettres. Two kinds is plenty for the matter under discussion. Both kinds buy their husbands' clothes, but their methods differ. One kind accompanies her husband to the store and swings the deal in person. There are not so many of this kind as there used to be. Evolution is often kind to the under dog and has developed a strain of craftiness in husbands that stands them in good stead.

But in escaping open humiliation they have never been able to evade the main issue. Any wife who is worthy of the name can buy her husband's clothes without so much as leaving her perfumed boudoir. There is no need of going into the disgusting details of this process, which has been going on for a good many years and nothing done about it.

That leaves only one question. Why do wives want their husbands to have two-pants suits? Is it for reasons of economy? Plainly it is not. Men like to wear old clothes. Women would have them always buying new ones, at enormous expense. The economy plea, so often advanced, falls at the first attack. Is it some mysterious, incurable feminine whim? Not in the least. The whole thing is perfectly simple. Women make men buy two-pants suits because men, the poor saps, have let it get out that they do not want to buy two-pants suits. And why do they not want to? Ah, fellow citizens, it is because they know it will annoy their wives. If that is not sound psychology, then no psychology is sound, and I sometimes suspect there is something in that, too.

BALLADE OF A SAVING GRACE

I do not expect to be thought of as blameless,
I'm fully aware of the mote in my eye,
I've been, on occasion, as thoroughly shameless
As any poor sinner you're likely to spy;
My faults and my failures I do not deny,
I bare my bent back to the flagellant stripe,
But give me some credit—and this, friends, is why—
I've never been photographed smoking a pipe.

My cruse has been empty, my torch has been flameless,
When I have been selling, nobody would buy,
My course has been ever erratic and aimless,
My shots hit the ground when I point at the sky.
But, nothing discouraged, I hold my head high,
And though I be clutched in Beelzebub's gripe,
With undaunted pride I'll continue to cry:
I've never been photographed smoking a pipe.

Regarding celebrities—let them be nameless—
Their pipe-smoking photos I smite hip and thigh;
I'd rather be poor and unnoticed and fameless
Than pose like an actor, and look like a guy.
My critics I challenge, my foes I defy,
I blazon my virtue in seven-point type,
And you'll read on my tombstone, whenever I die,
I've never been photographed smoking a pipe.

Prince, what I have said is not meant to imply
That I would prohibit the brier that's ripe,
But since in a picture it's sadly awry,
I've never been photographed smoking a pipe!

IT'S A GIFT

Once, when I was old enough to know better, I went quite of my own accord into a Gift Shoppe. It may even have been a Gyfte Shoppe. I took no particular notice at the time, never having been one who would look a Gift Shoppe in the mouth. Up to that time, I had never been inside a Shoppe of any kind, unless you count barber shoppes and cigar shoppes and the like, but you can't count them, because they have stayed straight and not got funny with the Divine Plan of spelling. How long they will hold out I don't know. Probably not long. Since the war spelling has gone from bad to worse. Only the blessed circumstances of prohibition saves us from having to patronize a place called Ye Olde Gynne Mylle.

The reason I went into the Gift Shoppe was that I wanted to buy a gift, or possibly a Gyfte, for my wife, or shall we say my wyffe. Scratch out that last word. I must stop this sort of thing before it grows on me. What I wanted was not a Christmas gift, nor a birthday gift, nor an anniversary gift. That made it hard. Department stores would have done for any of the usual kinds of gifts. But this was to be a gift out of a clear sky. And that was what I told the girl who came to wait on me in the Gift Shoppe.

"I want a present for my wife," I told her. "And I want it to be a present out of a clear sky."

"Oh," she said. "Then an umbrella won't do." An intelligent girl.

"No, not an umbrella," I agreed. "My wife has an umbrella. She has a fern, too," I added as an afterthought.

The girl perked up right away. "A fern? Then maybe you

can tell me. What does she do when the tips turn yellow? I have a fern myself, and it's more trouble!"

Not knowing anything about ferns, the only thing I could think of to say was that I never pry into my wife's affairs.

"I'll give her a ring sometime," said the girl.

"Do," I urged her. "I gave her a ring for her last birthday, but this time I want something less expensive."

The girl giggled appreciatively. A very intelligent girl. She then led me to a little table in the corner that had some things on it. "I want to show you," she said, "something awfully new and awfully clever." She picked up one of the things on the table and sort of fondled it. It was made partly of iridescent glass and partly of very shiny silver and it had butterflies on it in enamel. It was about the size of an eggplant, but nothing like the shape. If I wanted to make the riddle harder I could say it barked like a dog, but that would be a lie.

When I say I opened my mouth like a fish, that is not a lie. The thing the girl was holding was very pretty, but I had never seen anything like it before.

"What is it?" I asked—perhaps, as I realized now, a trifle too bluntly.

"Why," said the girl, "it's a gift"—and she dusted it off with her handkerchief, although it did not need to be dusted.

"I suppose so," I said, "but what is it for?"

"To give to someone," said the girl. Then she sighed. "I'd love to have one myself. It's from Czecho-Slovakia. These are the only ones in town."

I thought I would try an indirect approach. "If you had one, what would you do with it?" I asked her.

"Put it on the mantel," she said; "only I haven't got a mantel."

"Listen," I said, "it's beautiful, and all that, and Czecho-Slovakia is a wonderful little country, but my wife is a very

practical woman. She never enjoys a present unless she knows what it is for—you ought to have seen her when we opened our wedding presents. She can't put it on the mantel, because our mantel is all full of ship models. I'd like to give it to her, but she just wouldn't appreciate it."

"Wait a minute," said the girl. "I'll get the manager." And she did. The manager was a most artistic looking lady. She wore polychrome beads and had that batik look in her eyes. Another customer, a woman, had come in, and the girl I had been talking to went right over and sold her some nested ash trays in cloisonné. I asked the manager the same questions I had asked the girl, and got about the same answers. I began to feel as though I were meddling in affairs that were none of my business.

Finally I said to the manager: "I want to be fair about this. A gift is a gift, I realize that. Also I admit that you know your business. But you do not know my wife. This is your shoppe, but she is my wife. I will make you a proposition. Waiving all curiosity as to what this lovely thing is to be used for, I will buy it if you will tell me what it is called. Is it a go?"

The manager looked past me and out into the street. She was not as friendly as the girl had been. "I am sorry," she said, "but that is something I am unable to tell you. The invoices have not yet arrived."

That was the only experience I have ever had with Gift Shoppes, but I should not be surprised if it is at least part of the explanation of why wives get so many more boxes of candy than they really need.

PARLEZ-VOUS FRANÇAIS?

Observe the ads of underwear or furniture or soap,
Or any other thing you care to mention,
And notice how the writers for Parisian flavor grope
Till every second sentence is a French 'un.
It worries me, confuses me,
And equally amuses me,
My struggle to interpret "*pas de quoi*";
That sort of conversation
Is beyond my education,
For all the French I know is "Oo-la-la!"

The gallophilic tendency is also found to reign
In the modern and sophisticated drama,
And the meaning of the phrases seems to be entirely plain
To most patrons of "The Lavender Pajama."
It bothers me, it teases me,
Yet in a way it pleases me,
To have the Duke cry "*Tiens!*" instead of "Ha!";
As for "*s'il vous plaît,*" I hate it,
For I never could translate it,
But I love to hear them murmur "Oo-la-la!"

If I ever go to Paris, as with Fortune's aid I may,
I shall be in an equivocal position,
For the things I'm apt to order when I dine in a café
Would not, I venture, please a dietitian.
It mixes me, it vexes me,
It thoroughly perplexes me,

To recollect what's meant by "*petits pois*"—
But, oh, you must be near me,
You must stick around to hear me
Treat the natives with my cries of "Oo-la-la!"

THE MAN WHO WOULDN'T PLAY BRIDGE

It was rather pitiful about John Smith, although he liked to refer to himself as The Last of the Heretics, and pretended to be proud of it. He really earned the title, because his trial, when you got right down to it, was a heresy trial, even though the state attorney called it something else. Smith pleaded guilty to everything, and carried it off with something of an air, but as Oscar Wilde said in his poem, "I never saw a man who looked so wistfully at the day."

His wife had left him quite a while before, which did not seem to make him feel any better. John Smith claimed, and claims to this day, that he loved his wife. In fact, the only defense, if you could call it a defense, that he offered was that he loved his wife. "I refused to play bridge with her because I loved her," was the way he put it, and the cynics around town said he had stolen the idea from a contemporary lady murderer whose first statement to the press was, "I shot him because I loved him."

The only reason there had to be a trial was because public sentiment demanded it. The police records showed that Smith had bought a machine gun, concealed it behind a syringa bush on the grounds of J. G. ("J. G.") Andrews' palatial residence, and fired several belts of ammunition at the house, breaking several windows. Later he had set fire to the Andrews house, where a bridge party was being held. The players were all married couples, and were, of course, quarreling so violently that they did not notice anything wrong for a long time. They rushed out in the customary scant attire, and as they did so John Smith, abandoning the machine gun, threw eggs at them.

Then he went to police headquarters and gave himself up. These are the bare, official facts in the case.

Since Smith freely admitted everything, there was no need of a trial. But public opinion, as I have said, was outraged, and Smith was already in bad odor on account of his having refused to play bridge. Besides, there were no other trials being held, and the newspapers insisted that an example be made. They played the case up so intensely that reporters and photographers came from as far away as San Francisco and Jersey City and spent quite a lot of money, which was an excellent thing for the town.

Judge Bolster told Smith he would have to have an attorney, but no local lawyer would take the case, and the Bar Association even promulgated a special ethic to cover the case. For a while it presented a good deal of a legal problem, but a lawyer named Marks came from Detroit and offered his services gratis. Strangely enough, he was Smith's brother-in-law. That is, he was the brother of Smith's wife, the wife who had left him. There were some ugly rumors about him, one of them being that he had once written a letter to the editor of a Detroit paper making fun of bridge parties. However, he was in good standing at the bar, and was allowed to take the case.

As I have said, Smith pleaded guilty to the outrage at the Andrews home. "My only regret," he said, "is that nobody was hurt."

The state's attorney had little to do. He examined the few necessary witnesses and made a few remarks about the heinousness of the crime, then rested his case and left an assistant in charge. He was a busy man, and was taking lessons in the new game of contract bridge.

The judge, who was a kind man enough though an inveterate bridge player, inquired: "Does the defendant wish to take the stand?"

"He does, may it please the court," replied Smith's attorney and brother-in-law.

A description of Smith's attitude in what the English call the dock will be found in the opening paragraph of this account. He spoke in a low voice, but his words carried to the farthest corner of the crowded court room.

"Why did your wife leave you?" was Marks' first question.

"Because I would not go to bridge parties with her."

"Was that the only reason?"

"No, there was one other."

"What was that?"

"When she had bridge parties at our house, I would go out and get drunk."

"And why did you do these things?"

"Because I loved her."

"Will you explain, for the benefit of the court, what you mean by that?"

"I will not. It is none of the Court's business."

Here the assistant State's attorney objected, and Smith was reprimanded by the judge.

Marks took a new line. "Were you drunk when you broke up the bridge party at the Andrews home?"

"No, I was not drunk, nor was I suffering from temporary insanity, schizophrenia or dementia præcox. My mind was clear, and I knew exactly what I was doing. It was, in fact, premeditated."

"What was your object? You had no grudge against any of these people?"

"No, no grudge. But they were a symbol."

"A symbol?"

"Yes, a tinkling symbol. They tinkled. They couldn't talk. They didn't know how to talk. So they played bridge. When you play bridge you don't have to know how to talk.

You only have to know how to quarrel. Especially after you get home without winning any prizes."

"Did you realize that you might have killed somebody?"

"I did, but it didn't worry me. I was a symbol, too. I wouldn't play bridge, and so these people would barely speak to me, and my wife left me."

"In other words, you regarded the whole thing in a wholly abstract light?"

"Exactly. My shooting at the Andrews house and setting fire to it was one Idea clashing with another. It has always been that way in history."

A few perfunctory questions ended the examination.

I said at the beginning that John Smith's case was, to me at least, rather pitiful, and so it was, particularly at the end. He had counted, you see, on sacrificing himself to crystallize public opinion against bridge parties. But it turned out that there was no public opinion of that sort, nothing to crystallize. Smith was, so to speak, a complete waste of good martyr material. After he went to jail—a five-year sentence was the very least the judge could do—there were just as many bridge parties as before, just as little intelligent conversation and just as much quarreling. The case got a lot of publicity for a few days, but a fine triple murder took place at Cincinnati the following week, and Smith was promptly forgotten.

Apparently, however, he had one friend, or possibly one convert. He had only been in prison a couple of months when he suddenly disappeared. The warden of the prison disappeared at the same time, and neither has since been heard of. The warden's record was perfectly clear, but his wife was one of the best bridge players in the state, gave lessons and had won several cups.

NEGLECTED EDUCATION

My grasp of ornithology is shaky and infirm,
And I cannot tell a martin from a wren;
I know the early bird sets out to fletcherize the worm,
But I do not know what happens to him then.
I have heard an expect cackle as he pointed out a grackle,
I have chatted with a blackbird-connoisseur,
But I've never risked my legs hunting grosbeaks and their eggs,
Or listened for the catbird's happy purr.

When the birds beneath my window pipe their early morning lay,
I don't know which are larks and which are crows;
But I wish they would postpone it until later in the day—
It would sound a great deal sweeter, goodness knows!
Not with guns and not with arrows have I shot at English sparrows,
I have never stalked the wary chickadee—
Even mallards, teal and widgeons, not to mention pouter pigeons,
Are permanently safe for all of me.

And that is how it happened that I caught this awful cold—
My ignorance of bird-lore is to blame.
I heard a birdie singing as I casually strolled,
But had not the least idea of its name.
I thought (what could be dumber?) 'twas a harbinger of summer,
And made haste my wintry underwear to doff . . .
Better far I had seen *no* bird than that poor belated snowbird—
Please pardon me a moment while I cough!

MY COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS

This is one of those wistful interludes that appear, inevitably, in the life of any man who devotes himself principally to brightening the corner where he is, as the revival hymn urges him to do.

I had made speeches before, but I had never made a commencement address. Nobody who knows me really well would ever ask me to make a commencement address. Even with the old Phi Beta Kappa key in its proper pectoral position, I am not, as the casting director would say, the type. As a walking advertisement of the advantages of education I lack pulling power, to say nothing of customer-appeal.

So it was natural that my first invitation to deliver a commencement address should have come from strangers. Fairly remote strangers, too, representing Oskanaton High School up north of the Reservation. I never found out where the principal of Oskanaton High got the idea that I would be a good man to deliver a commencement address. Certainly there was no clue in his telegram, which read:

WILL YOU DELIVER COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS HIGH SCHOOL MAY TWENTY EXPENSES AND HONORARIUM.

What really got me was the "honorarium." The word, I mean, not the check itself. "Fee" would have been no inducement, nor even "stipend." But a man can't help feeling different toward "honorarium." It is the kind of word that overcomes diffidence. I could, in my mind's ear, hear someone whisper, as I mounted the platform of Oskanaton High, "We are paying him an honorarium for coming here." And I could feel myself regarded with greater deference and respect.

So of course I said I would come. And I went to work on my address. It is harder work writing a commencement address than a mere superficial observer might think. There is a theory held by some educators that listening to a commencement address is a more grueling task than making such an address. This theory may have facts to support it. I do not know; my experience is limited. Personally, however, I would rather listen to a commencement address than write one.

At the outset I put resolutely aside all temptation to be startling or revolutionary. I have some ideas on education that are pretty liberal, but I doubted if Oskanaton High was ripe enough to receive them. It wouldn't be fair, I reasoned, to hurl at a group of totally unprepared youngsters a lot of ideas that might prove upsetting. Immature minds, and so forth. The thing, obviously, to do was to prepare those minds, gently, for what they would have to tussle with on the higher planes of educational experience.

I realized that I ran the risk of being trite, but, after all, the great graduating class of Oskanaton High would not know until years later that I had been trite, and by that time they would have forgotten, or at any rate would have forgiven.

(Note to editor: The tenses in the above paragraph seem to be slightly confused, but probably nothing can be done about it. That is what comes of introducing speculative passages into straightforward narrative.)

I wrote my commencement address, I rewrote it, and I memorized it. I prepared myself to say to the graduating class of Oskanaton High that commencement is not the end, but the beginning, of true education. High school, with all its beloved associations, is but a tiny vestibule in the great hall of learning. Our great democracy has for one of its cornerstones the principle that every boy and girl of humble origin or aristocratic lineage, has an equal opportunity with every other boy and girl to receive the blessings of mental unfoldment. The

doors of the great universities are open to all. The country needs, not more great fortunes, but more enlightened minds. Do not be led astray by the *ignis fatuus* of immediate gain, but keep always in mind the greater rewards that lie beyond. Close with quotation from Matthew Arnold.

When I took the train to Oskanaton I knew that speech. When I got off the train, just in time for the beginning of the commencement exercises, I was master of it. I shook the hand of the principal with the degree of confidence suited to the prospective receiver of an honorarium.

"I thought," said the principal, "that you might like to know something about our graduating class."

I smiled and said, "It doesn't really matter."

The principal went on: "It's rather a smaller class than usual. In fact, only two students are to receive diplomas. They will sit on the platform, of course. One is valedictorian, the other salutatorian."

The smallness of the class, I said, with diminished smile, didn't matter.

"Both of them," said the principal, "are girls."

Well, I could leave out the part about manly men not despising the fruits of culture.

We walked into the high school auditorium and back to the stage. "By the way," said the principal, "they were both married this morning, to fine young farmers down on the Reservation. You won't mind, I suppose—it's a matter of sentiment—if their husbands sit beside them on the stage?"

A CONVENTION PRIMER

The Delegate.

This is a Del-e-gate.

He is a long way from Home.

But that is not why he is sad. No, he is sad because a Com-mit-tee is using his room, and he needs sleep.

Besides, he is broke.

Is there anything sadder than a Del-e-gate who is broke? Yes, children, there is. It is a Fa-vor-ite Son who has just been caressed by the Steam Rol-ler.

The Ovation.

What is all the noise about?

The Del-e-gates are cheering for a Than Whom who has been placed in Nom-i-na-tion.

Is it a Spon-ta-ne-ous Dem-on-stra-tion?

Oh, quite. It was spon-ta-ne-ously arranged by a Com-mit-tee last February.

How long will it last?

Until that man over there with the stop-watch gives a Sig-nal.

Will the Can-di-date for whom they are cheering be our next Pres-i-dent?

No, but he will get all he has paid for.

The Press Table.

Here we have the Press Table.

It is crowded with hard-working Jour-nal-ists.

The large gentleman on the left is Ed-i-tor of the Re-frig-

er-a-tor World. Next to him is the Wash-ing-ton Cor-re-spond-ent of the Knights of Pythias Es-cutch-eon.

The Lady with the Diamonds is a Movie Star, getting Im-pres-sions. On one side of her is a Po-lice In-spec-tor, and on the other side a National Com-mit-tee-man.

Ah, the Ser-geant-at-Arms has just thrown a man out. But it doesn't matter. He is only a Re-por-ter on a daily News-paper.

IT'S A HARD WORLD FOR POETS

Ernest Dowson, in a New York restaurant, cried for madder music and for stronger wine. He got the madder music.

. . . . . .

William Butler Yeats decided he would arise and go now, and go to Innisfree. He hopes to have the passport formalities completed in about six months.

. . . . . .

Percy Bysshe Shelley met a traveler from an antique land, who said, "You can have it for just what it cost me. Smuggled, ever bit of it."

. . . . . .

Sara Teasdale asked of the night of stars what she should give her love, and an advertising aviator wrote on the sky in letters of flame: "Snagproof Sox."

. . . . . .

Seated one day at the organ, Adelaide Anne Proctor was weary and ill at ease, simply because no one had ever told her how to use auto-suggestion.

. . . . . .

Robert Browning's query as to what porridge had John Keats was immediately answered by eleven enterprising manufacturers of cereals.

. . . . . .

Henry W. Longfellow shot an arrow into the air. Thirty days.

. . . . . .

Citizens, hearing François Villon inquire as to the whereabouts of the snows of yesteryear, took him down a side street

and showed him some, apologizing for the inefficiency of the Street Cleaning Department.

. . . . . .

William Wordsworth wandered lonely as a cloud. Later, he told reporters that it was a tall man and a short man, and that several hundred dollars in bills in an inside pocket had been overlooked.

. . . . . .

Kipling talked o' gin and beer, but after a while nobody paid any attention to him.

LITTLE HELPS TO MOTORISTS

I bought my car because I wanted freedom.

I wanted to be free to come and go as I pleased. I wanted to be free to "follow the winding road where the lovely hand of nature lures and beckons"—which was an expression used in an advertisement of which I was particularly fond.

It was not until after I had bought my car that I began to notice other advertisements of a less pleasing kind. One showed an automobile skidding on a wet street and being demolished against a pole. There were several children in the automobile. I had several children. The argument of the advertisement was that the same sort of thing would almost certainly happen to me unless I used a certain make of tire chains. It was meant to be a helpful advertisement.

Another picture showed two cars colliding, with a great deal of flying glass and several casualties imminent. The text asserted, without mincing matters, that this was no more than might be expected unless both cars were equipped with suitable bumpers. A certain type of bumper was suggested as suitable.

My wife went to some pains to show me an advertisement she had cut out, of a motor car on fire. The driver, who, I must admit, bore a superficial resemblance to myself, was helpless and apparently somewhat singed, having failed to provide himself with a certain make of fire extinguisher.

The next advertisement was not illustrated, but was exceptionally well written, and explained how my savings might be wiped out by a suit for damages, if I were not protected by a specifically named insurance policy.

Some men came one day and pasted a large poster on a billboard across the street from my house. It showed a motor car full of people about to plunge through an open drawbridge. The expression of horror on the faces of the people in the car was vividly done. The inscription was:

"Can You Trust Your Brakes?"

Even more impressive, as I remember it, was the lithograph sent me in the mail by our local Safety First committee. In the picture a locomotive was striking an automobile that had got part way across the track. "Don't," implored the caption, "let this happen to *you!*"

I sold my car because I wanted to get some sleep.

THE FORMULAS THAT FAILED

Miss Araminta Gurry was indubitably nice,
And might have made some man a charming wife,
But, although she'd had her hand held in the movies once or twice,
She had never been proposed to in her life.

Things didn't seem to happen to Miss Araminta G.
As they happened in the novels that she read;
She would ask young men to dinner, she would even give them tea,
But none of them showed eagerness to wed.

Having thought the matter over, she perused the magazines,
And was happily no longer at a loss,
For advertising geniuses suggested sundry means
To put her personality across.

First, a daily 15 minutes she allotted to a set
Of cultural and educative books,
And not until she had finished these did Araminta let
Her mind dwell on the matter of her looks.

Then she sent for gratis pamphlets which were mailed to her by reams,
With Before-and-After-Taking illustrations
That showed how daily miracles are worked by clays and creams
And pleasant flesh-reducing preparations.

So much for her appearance. It was necessary now
To study, in authoritative tomes,
The art of introducing, and to whom one ought to bow,
And how to be at ease in people's homes.

She did the job completely, overlooking not a bet
In obeying the injunctions of the ads,
She learned the model manners of the fashionable set
And she kept in touch with all the latest fads.

She could talk on any topic from the A's clear through the Z's,
And she had the sort of skin you love to touch.
She could order meals in restaurants with admirable ease,
And she painted just a little, but not much.

And she married—but her triumph was not based on any book,
The fellow liked her way of making stew.
It seemed that what he wanted was a lady who could cook—
And he left her when he found how much she knew!

HOW I BAGGED MY BOOK AGENT

When other men brag to me about their trophies of the hunt—their moose or their elk or even their hartebeests and Thompson's gazelles, I listen respectfully without saying much, and then I take them to my house and show them my trophy. That settles them, because nobody has a trophy exactly like mine.

Please notice that I said *exactly* like mine. I know that other people have stuffed book agents in their trophy rooms. It is not an uncommon thing for a clever hunter to shoot a book agent, and taxidermists simply love to stuff them, because of the thickness of the hide. But my stuffed book agent is different. Not a bullet hole, not even a meat-ax scar, mars its perfection. This is because I killed my book agent with his own weapons, asking and giving no odds. It is the same as if I had hugged to death a grizzly bear, or outbitten a rattlesnake. I used no ambush, no decoy, no Indian guide. When they realize all this, my sportsmen friends are not backward in acknowledging that I have them beaten.

I have told the story many times, but there must be some who have not heard it and would be interested. Always I say that I do not claim any extraordinary credit, that I simply kept my head and took advantage of the breaks. I am not one to embellish with fanciful detail the facts of an adventure, and that, perhaps, is why my exploits are not more widely known.

Mine is, of course, a male book agent. The law is very strict on that point, and I always respect the law. I could mention certain persons who have not been so particular, and, although they have evaded punishment by claiming self-de-

fense, I have never been impressed with the ingenuousness of their claims.

At the time it happened, I had no intention of bagging a book agent. In fact, I do not approve of the wanton slaughter of these interesting creatures that often masquerades under the name of sport. The circumstances were so unusual that the spirit of adventure swept me away, and it was all over before I fully realized what had happened.

I got home early from the office one afternoon and the maid said a gentleman had called, and would return.

"Did he leave any message?" I asked.

"Yeah," said the maid, in her well trained way. "He said he represented a great educational institution, and had something of great importance to tell you. He certainly was an educated looking fella."

I began to see visions of honorary degrees and endowed lectureships and things like that.

"He dropped this little book when he went out," the maid continued. "I hollered after him, but he didn't hear me."

She handed me the book and the visions stopped. At once I saw the whole situation. At once, too, a Plan flashed into my mind. I said to the maid: "I am going to my study. Do not disturb me. If the prominent educator returns, tell him to wait, and notify me of his presence."

The maid said "Yeah."

It would be foolish to say that the little book gave me a thrill. That does not begin to express it. If Napoleon, the night before Waterloo, had held in his hands a complete scenario of the enemy's plan of campaign, you would not have said he was thrilled. That sort of thing goes deeper than ordinary superficial sensations. And the little book that I had taken to my study with me was an official copy—no less—of Instructions to Salesmen, issued by the Marvel Educational

Foundations, publishers of the Marvel Compendium of Universal Knowledge, in 12 volumes.

I buried myself in its pages. I memorized passages. I made a little outline of what you might call the first phases of the battle, and I memorized that. When the emissary of education arrived, I was ready for him.

I walked briskly into the living room and straight up to the man, my hand outstretched. "Good afternoon, Mr. Winkle!" I cried. His name had been on the book, of course. He got up and started to say something. But I kept right on. "As you have already learned from the neighbors, Mr. Winkle, I have two children in school. And I'm vitally interested in their getting a good, broad, all-round education. In fact, that's exactly what I want to talk to you about. Take that chair by the window. It is more comfortable and the light is good. I shan't keep you more than 10 minutes, for I know you are a busy man."

Mr. Winkle was still trying to say something, but I hustled him over to a chair. "By the way," I said, "isn't that a prospectus you are carrying? Tut, tut, Mr. Winkle! Let me remind you of your instructions:

" 'Of course your prospectus should never be displayed. That would cause some to think they know your mission without an interview. Ladies should carry their prospectus, order books and two pencils in a music roll, newspaper, cloth bag or large envelope. Men carry these in a pocket under the coat, hung over one shoulder.' "

The man was badly shaken, but he rallied bravely and said, "These books——"

"Hush, Mr. Winkle!" I said, "never say books. You may call it a Work, or you may call it a Help, but the horrid word Book should never soil an interview with a Prospect. I dislike to be severe, but you must, you really must, play the game."

I could see that I had him badly weakened, and I did not hesitate to press my advantage. "I'll tell you what to do, Mr. Winkle," I said, "skip the preparatory talk and go right into Sales Talk Number 5. You know, the short one, beginning, 'It isn't a question of whether you can afford this Work, but of whether you can afford to be without it.' From that go right into Clincher Number 3. And one thing more. Don't bother with the first three prices. Give me the Last Resort Price for Hard Boiled Prospects, and we will talk business. Now, go ahead. I'm listening."

But I would have listened in vain. The late Mr. Winkle had nothing to say. I had bagged my book agent, and he measured just a fraction less than six feet from tip to tip, including Art Leather cover.

THE MAN WHO DARED

Let's sing a song of glory to Themistocles O'Shea,
Who ate a dozen oysters on the second day of May!

He never had been credited for anything he'd done,
As being any braver than the ordinary run.
He labored in an office and he led a quiet life,
And always was respectful to policemen and his wife;
He bowed to all conventions and obeyed the written laws,
And taught his children to believe there is a Santa Claus.

Another curious circumstances is this: that T. O'Shea
Had cared for oysters only in the most platonic way;
He ate them on occasion, as the proper thing to eat,
But he looked upon it rather as a gastronomic feat.
For food, he thought the oyster was a pretty poor excuse,
And no member of his family was addicted to their use.

But spring was in his blood one day; he fretted like a colt—
'Twas the psychologic moment for a gesture of revolt;
And the spark that lit the tinder was a voice that said:
"Remember,
It is wrong to eat an oyster between April and September."
Our hero's eyes flashed flames of fire; he cried, "The hell you
say—
I'd have you know you're talking to Themistocles O'Shea!"
And, pausing only to inquire where oysters could be got,
He bought himself a dozen and devoured them on the spot.

The scandal was tremendous, the community was shocked;
And when the news was flashed abroad the entire country
rocked.

The press and pulpit thundered at such nonconformist stunts,
And the senate passed a motion to investigate at once.
He lost his job for daring to transgress the social rules,
And they wouldn't take his children in the better class of schools.

Alone and unsupported did he face the angry crowd,
Yet his head, though it was bloody, was consistently unbowed;
He flung defiance to them all, and loudly rang his cry:
"I'll eat a dozen more in June, and also in July!"
He swore by all the gods above, for every one to hear,
That as long as he was living he would do it every year;
And so stanch was his rebellion that our ancient oyster laws
Are now defied by hundreds of adherents to his cause.

Let's sing a song of glory to Themistocles O'Shea,
Who ate a dozen oysters on the second day of May!

SOCRATES WAS RIGHT

It is related of Socrates that he was asked by one of his disciples whether in all Athens it were possible to find a sadder man than the player of a bass viol, or dog house.

"Yes," said the sage. "A piano tuner is the saddest of living men."

If Socrates really said this—and it is probably as true as most of the stories about him—it showed he had been around a great deal, and kept his eyes open. You have to be a keen observer to know anything about piano tuners. Millions now living have never seen one, as far as they know. Many believe they have heard piano tuners at work, but they cannot speak with any degree of certainty, because it might have been one of the neighbor children practicing. The two sounds are much alike, unless you have a trained ear. If you have a trained ear, you do not stay to listen. A piano tuner at work may be technically correct, but he is not interesting. He does not seem to know any tunes, and that is funny, when you come to think of it.

The few who have seen piano tuners will support the statement that, to all outward appearance, they are men of sorrows. They would be mistaken, by the uninformed, for undertakers, except that undertakers are always jolly and wear lodge emblems. Piano tuners do not belong to lodges. If they did, lodge room pianos would not sound the way they do. Lodges would be glad to have piano tuners join them, but it does not work out. Tuning pianos takes the gregariousness out of a man, and who can blame him? Not I, for one.

Anyone who has called a piano tuner to his home knows what a depressing experience it is. In the first place, he is

not called until the piano is in a very bad way indeed. The house is always full of plumbers, because when you need a plumber, you need him. And anyway, plumbers are more cheerful company. Some of them sing at their work. If a piano tuner were to sing at his work, you would be justified in denouncing him as an impostor, and having him indicted under the Corrupt Practices Act.

Probably what made piano tuners sad in the first place was the fact that their clients always wait until the baby grand is *in extremis*. The piano tuner is melancholy from the moment he enters the door, for he knows from experience what he will have to listen to. He has been there so many times. He is more melancholy as he breaks out his kit of tools, and when he sounds A on the piano he looks as if he had just found out the bank had failed. He asks how long it has been since the piano was tuned, and when you give him the information, lying only a little, he shakes his head sadly and seems to see no hope.

I saw a piece in the paper the other day about a convention of piano tuners that had been held, probably in a nice cozy mausoleum or on the Reef of Norman's Woe. To judge from the piece in the paper, it was the kind of convention you would expect it to be. The principal speaker said that 90 per cent of the nation's pianos are, at any given moment, out of tune. He asked his hearers to imagine what effect that state of affairs is having on the musical ear of America.

Well, we all know what the musical ear of America is like, and now we know the reason for same. Take almost any American, blindfold him, sound F sharp, and the chances are he will guess it is B minus. His ear has been ruined by sweet pianos jangled, out of tune and harsh, as Hamlet said of Ophelia.

The piano tuners know their overtones, and there is no use arguing with them. If they say 90 per cent of the pianos are

out of tune, that statement must be allowed to go on the record, along with the statement that four out of five girls order chicken salad. But we have one comeback. We can say "What of it?"

Taking them by and large, there are two kinds of piano players plying their trade today. One kind plays blues and "sweetie" songs. What good would a properly tuned piano be to them, or to their hearers?

The other kind plays Stravinsky and similar ultra-modern stuff, very high class, but containing no tunes recognizable as such. It is an improvement, if anything, to have Stravinsky's opuses played on a slightly off-pitch piano.

Also we have with us radio loud speakers. Who is going to tune those?

FROM THE RECORD

I

The Senate was debating what the tariff ought to be
On desiccated seaweed from the Saragossa Sea.
To make his major premise clear, the Senator from Maine
Read expurgated extracts from the Works of Paul Verlaine.
The Senator from Utah cried: "Those verses plainly show
The influence on Paul Verlaine of Edgar Allan Poe!"
Then from the Democratic side arose a mighty shout
Of "You're a liar!" "Take that back!" and "Turn the rascals out!"
A Senator took off his coat, and said that he would fight
The man who said that Edgar Poe wrote "Israfel" when tight.
But when, to calm the rising storm, the Senator from Maine
Announced that he had finished with the Works of Paul Verlaine,
They all resumed debating what the tariff ought to be
On desiccated seaweed from the Saragossa Sea.

II

The Senate was discussing if the free list should include
By-products of the upas tree prepared for use as food.
Supporting his contention, by permission of the Chair,
The Senator from Florida was singing, "Ah, So Fair";
And when he had concluded, he was greeted with applause,
But the Senator from Texas cried, "There ain't no Santa Claus!"
And the subsequent discussion took so violent a turn
That the tariff was forgotten till the time came to adjourn.

III

The Senate was debating in a manner most profound
If tripe should be considered by the yard or by the pound,
And a solon from Kentucky had been speaking for an hour
On the therapeutic value of the elderberry flower,
But yielded, for the Sage of Alabama to recite
A poem he had written, called "When Susie Says Good Night,"
And that reminded someone of a piece that he had read
Entitled "How to Cultivate a Gladiolus Bed,"
And so on, till the Senate heard the bells at midnight chime,
And everyone departed, having had a lovely time.

IT'S THE AROMA

It is getting harder and harder for a person, especially if he does not smoke cigarettes, to understand the passionate preferences of persons who do smoke cigarettes. At any given time, nobody who is anybody would dream of smoking anything but Happy Thoughts—"They Make You Think." At some other given time to smoke Happy Thoughts is utterly wrong, for the whole cigarette-smoking public has stampeded to Cleopatra cigarettes—"Just Enough Alfalfa." This year Leopards are the official brand; next year it will probably be the Aroma Borealis, or maybe some new kind that is not even on the market now.

The funny part of it is, that they all taste and smell exactly alike. This is natural enough, since they are all made out of the same kind of tobacco. At any rate, they all taste and smell alike to the noncigarette smoker. Suggest it to an addict and it annoys him. He will tell you that any fool—meaning you—should be able to tell the difference between the strong, rank flavor of a Bozo and the delicate taste of a Zippo. He could tell the difference with one puff, in the dark, with both hands tied behind him. There is no more sense in arguing the point than there is wasting valuable time arguing about politics or religion.

Back in the days when cigarettes were so many nails in your coffin and were generally admitted to stunt the growth because they contained minute quantities of opium, it was easy enough to decide which brand you were going to use. It all depended on whether you were collecting pictures of baseball players, art studies of popular actresses, or celluloid buttons with the flags of all nations. Cigarette manufacturers in those days did

not spend all their money buying testimonials from prominent people. They gave away objects of art, and the customer got the benefit. Cigarettes had no social standing then, but they did have educational value.

One thing can be said for the cigarette manufacturers today, and that is that they and their advertising experts appeal to their customers' higher instincts. In fact, they compete directly and aggressively with the concerns that sell culture and refinement by correspondence, Send No Money. If you smoke the right brand of cigarettes you will get to be one of those handsome, efficient, well-set-up big business men. You will puff contentedly as you sit at a mahogany desk and order secretaries about. Or you will recline in an easy chair at home while an adoring wife hovers over you and a lovely and devoted daughter sits at the grand piano.

That is, in case you aspire to material success. If your ambition is in another direction, you can lounge in nobby flannels beside a Classy Dame, blowing neat rings and letting her admire you. In this instance, you are not a middle-aged business executive, but a lithe and slender young man of the upper leisure classes.

There is no use talking, it gets them. The customers, I mean. Oh, they may deny that they pay any attention to the ads, and say that they smoke cigarettes because they like them, or because they don't give them heartburn, or some other sensible reason. But they know, down in their hearts, that they want to be like the people in the ads.

All of which is most instructive, but does not explain why it is just about compulsory to smoke Happy Thoughts this year, and switch to Mazumas next year. Maybe it is behaviorism. People say that behaviorism explains almost everything. What behaviorism is, I have only a vague idea. I must look it up and see if it says anything about cigarettes.

SONG OF THE FRUSTRATED PEDESTRIAN

I do not doubt what doctors tell,
That if I walk 'twill keep me well,
That hiking through the bosky dell
Will brace my constitution.
I'd love like anything to go
At snappy pace of heel and toe,
And every little while or so
I make a resolution.

But I can't do it, they won't let me walk,
The people who drive in the cars.
They pull up beside me, and say to get in,
And if I refuse to, they hate me like sin.
They're always driving, they think it is grand;
For all my explaining, they don't understand
That if I'm aloof, it's because I want to hoof it—
I can't go out walking at all!

If being healthy is your goal,
There's nothing like a good long stroll
Adjacent to a grassy knoll,
Or by a purling river.
It keeps you fashionably thin,
Removes all trace of double chin,
Encourages a ruddy skin,
And stimulates the liver.

But you can't do it; they won't let you walk,
The people who drive their machines.

They pull up beside you and honk in your ear,
And if you reject them, they sniff and they sneer.
They like to motor all over the land,
And for all your explaining, they don't understand
That you prefer walking to sitting and talking—
They won't let you do it at all!

ART IN THE HOME

Art, if taken in moderation, never did anybody much harm. Some people have let Art get the best of them, but the chances are they were weaklings to begin with. For ordinary people, who can stop when they have had enough, Art is perfectly all right. It depends largely on the hormones. Hormones are something like vitamins, only more dangerous. Not to get too scientific about it, a hormone is to a vitamin what humidity is to heat. I got hormones, you got hormones, all God's chillun got hormones; but the quota is different in every case. Persons whose hormone-count is high should not trifle with Art. It is very likely to get them in the end, and a person who has been taken over the jumps by Art is not a pretty sight. But if you take the proper precautions you are reasonably safe.

It must be understood that no precautions are any good when it comes to Artists. Nobody ought to have any truck with Artists. They are devils, and that is all there is to it. Fortunately, they herd pretty much by themselves, and nobody has to come in contact with them unless he wants to. They are bad though frequent husbands, and they are always talking about themselves, in which respect they differ very noticeably from Business Men.

But we can admit the worst about Artists and still be open-minded, or even hospitable, toward Art. Every home ought to have a certain amount of Art in it, and this is especially true since the closing of the saloons, which with all their faults were the Poor Man's Art Gallery.

Art in the home is no trouble at all if you can afford an

Interior Decorator. But if you can afford to have an Interior Decorator, you can afford not to live at home, so what price etchings? No, let us disregard Interior Decorators in this quite informal discussion.

Homes have always had Art in them, and probably they always will have. This is because there will probably always be Wedding Presents. People with homes do not as a rule purchase Art. They have it given to them. It is a risky thing to give anybody a book, but Art Book Ends are always safe. Many of our best homes have Art Book Ends but no books, which is better for all concerned than if it were the other way around.

Book ends are a sign of progress. The world has grown a lot better since the standard wedding present was a piece of hand painted china. Girls, for some reason or other, do not study china painting any more. Nor do they seem to go in for water-color painting, to any great extent. In fact, girls do not have *any* genteel accomplishments. The reason for this is that they simply do not give a damn about being genteel. It is perfectly wonderful.

People, then, do not create their own Art for domestic purposes, and as I said in an earlier stanza, they do not buy it. You have to hand it to them.

The Art you find in the average home today is not ideal, but it has its moments. At any rate, there aren't any crayon enlargements. The greatest tribute you can pay to the sturdy vitality of the American home is that it has survived the crayon enlargement. You may say anything you want to about ship models and polychrome candlesticks, but they don't make people wake up screaming in the night, the way crayon enlargements used to.

One reason we have so much better art in our homes is that we have got rid of all this individualistic nonsense. When we want some pictures for a house, we get the regulation num-

bers from the Approved List of the department stores. So you can go into a house for the first time and know pretty well what you are going to see. If it isn't Hope or The Song of the Lark, it will be After the Storm, or The Lone Wolf. When you miss Madame LeBrun and her Daughter, you are pretty sure to find Boy with Rabbit. A home that goes in for Maxfield Parrish prints seldom has anything else. Where you find one Parrish print you find several, and this is as it should be. Any family that sticks to a single Parrish is bound to become parochial-minded, and if that isn't the Worst Pun of 1927, then I'm Joseph Pulitzer.

Next to Interior Decorators, the most expensive form of Art is hand-painted oil paintings. With these, as with other domestic accessories, the upkeep is worse than the original cost. Styles of interior decoration change so often that if you own a lot of hand-painted oil paintings it keeps you broke changing the frames. The pictures themselves do not matter, but the frames have to be Period Stuff to match the rest of the furniture. I do not know the name of the man who invented Period Stuff, but he deserves to be, and probably is, the Patron Saint of Grand Rapids, Mich.

This lecture does not go into the matter of Antiques. That is for the reason that Antiques do not come under the head of Art. They will be fully considered when the Professor gets around to Abnormal Psychology and Grand Larceny.

HERE LIES A GOLFER

Here lies a golfer; spring and fall
He kept his eye upon the ball,
He did not slice, he did not hook,
He played according to the book;
No matter how the ball might lie,
He never pulled an alibi;
He frowned on cuss-words such as "Hades,"
And loved to go around with ladies;
He did not lose his self-control
When playing for a ball a hole.

Here lies a golfer, keen for sport;
Replacing divots was his *forte,*
He gave the benefit of doubt
To caddies when he bawled them out;
He never sneered at timid dubs
Or cast aspersions on their clubs;
It was his custom, when annoyed,
To smile, and say: "We can't avoid
Such little things as topping drives
Or playing foursomes with our wives."

Here lies a golfer; fall and spring
He constantly improved his swing;
He almost never had to go
For aid and comfort to the Pro;
And, most remarkable of all,
He never lost a single ball!

These are the facts beyond surmise:
He himself says so—here he lies,
And lies,
and lies,
and lies!

THE PROMINENT CITIZEN PROBLEM

I have just thought of another wonderful argument for militarism.

The military system automatically settles all questions of relative rank; and on this vital subject there is absolutely no civilian authority.

In this great democracy nearly every citizen has by now some sort of a title, and on all sides we see the wildest confusion.

Does a District Governor of Rotary go in to dinner ahead of an Exalted Cyclops?

Which should be in the center of the photograph, a Territorial Sales Manager or a Bishop Coadjutor?

Does one present a Doctor of Philosophy to a National Committeeman, or vice versa?

Many a public meeting has been a complete failure because the chairman did not know where an Imperial Potentate ought to sit on the platform with relation to a Third Vice President.

The etiquette books have dodged the subject. The Perfect Behavior columns in the newspapers are afraid to tackle it. Nothing is likely to be done until we turn the whole social organization over to the Army and Navy. They know how to handle things like that.

LOTS OF SERVICE

Being in a great hurry, I drove into the nearest filling station instead of going around the block to the little place where I usually get my free air.

This was a new filling station that I had not seen before. I am quite sure it had not been there when I drove by the previous day. Now that I remember it, they were pulling down an old house on that corner, and here, already, was a filling station, built to resemble a Chinese pagoda of, let us say, the P'Tui dynasty. It had colored lights all over it, and a radio set in full cry, and a small soda fountain. Maybe it served a merchant's lunch or something at noon, but this was 6:30 in the evening, and I had just half an hour to get home and dress for dinner.

I drove up to the gasoline pump, which was a tall red automatic affair with a sort of aquarium on top, and about a dozen fellows came running out and stood at attention, more or less. Some had rags and sponges in their hands, some had oil cans and water buckets, and one, I would have sworn, had a large can of talcum powder.

"Five gallons," I said, trying to convey by my tone of voice that I was in a hurry.

"Yes, sir," said the young man at the pump. He seemed to be in command of all the other young men, having an air of authority and a slightly more elaborate uniform. He did a few Swedish movements with the hose, and in no time at all the gasoline was flowing into my depleted tank. I felt fine. This was Service!

The young man stepped to the window of the car and

touched his cap. Every time he addressed me he touched his cap. I have never seen anybody more respectful.

"How's the oil?" he asked.

"Oh, it's all right," I replied, being in a hurry.

He touched his cap and said, "I'd better take a look." Then he disappeared under the car.

As soon as he was out of sight the rest of the attendants dashed forward and seemed to swarm all over my sedan. I felt like Gulliver among the Lilliputians, only these fellows were ordinary size. One of them unscrewed the radiator cap and began pouring water. Two or three others began wiping off the windshield and windows. The one with the oil can joined his commanding officer under the car. I could not see what the fellow with the can of talcum powder was doing, but I found out afterward that he had been dusting some places on the right rear fender that, in one way or another, had suffered slight abrasions.

I said: "You needn't bother, fellows, thank you very much. You see, I'm in a hurry." If they heard me, they paid no attention.

The head man reappeared. "Would you like to have me tighten the fan belt?" he asked. "It's slipping a little."

"Not this time," I said. "I'm in a hurry." So he tightened the fan belt.

By this time the window cleaning squad had finished the outside and started on the inside. I spoke to them again about not bothering, but they went right ahead. Probably they did not dare to stop without word from the head man, and he was tightening the fan belt.

But when he finished that, and came back and touched his cap again, he did not give them any order, and they kept right on. He had something else he wanted to ask me. "Like to have me check the battery?" was his question. I think he must have been a barber in a previous incarnation.

I said "No," and he climbed in, yanked up the floor board and signaled to a subordinate who came running with a jar of distilled water. The window cleaners jumped out, relieving the congestion a little, and dashed over to another car that had driven in.

"Battery O.K. Tests up fine," said the commanding officer.

"How much do I owe you?" I inquired.

"Wait just a second," he said. "I want to look at that front tire."

He disappeared. I looked at my watch. Something seemed to snap, as murderers say in their confessions. Not in my watch, in me. I started the car, and off I went. There was a noticeable bump. I looked back and found that I had run over the young man as he examined the front tire. The last I saw of him he was touching his cap.

When I got home it was a great deal later than it should have been. "What on earth has made you so late?" asked my wife, who had been all dressed and ready for what she described as æons.

I said, "*Damn!*"

"You needn't swear at me," said my wife.

But I wasn't swearing at her. I had just remembered that I had forgotten to pay for my gasoline.

ASTRONOMY

Please do not chide me, for that I,
Though of a studious age the scion,
In gazing at the summer sky
Cannot tell Vega from Orion.
I would be happy, if I knew
My way among the constellations,
But when the firmament I view,
I yield to ancient incantations.

Star light, star bright,
First star I've seen tonight,
Wish I may, wish I might
Have the wish I wish tonight!

You mustn't think I underprize
Astronomy's sweet boon and blessing;
I wish I knew the teeming skies
By rote, for I am tired of guessing;
But always, when with chart and book
I sit, a truant from my bed,
After a single upward look
Some strain starts running through my head.

Stars of the summer night,
Far in yon azure deeps,
Hide, hide your golden light,
She sleeps, my lady sleeps!

I am a traitor to the times,
My science is in shreds and tatters,

Because a lot of scurvy rhymes
Have spoiled my mind for higher matters.
Poor mind! It struggles with the names
Of Cassiopeia and Mars,
But plays the silliest childish games
Whenever I observe the stars.

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are,
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky!

REMINISCENCES OF NEW YORK

I first set eyes on New York City in 1910. Six years later I collaborated with a man from Sandusky, Ohio, in preparing "An Old New Yorker's Recollections of the Bowery," for a popular weekly magazine.

The West is the land of opportunity. I have heard that said very often and I have seen it proved a number of times. But one afternoon in New York three of us started for a circus, couldn't get within a block of the Garden (we had forgotten it was a Jewish holiday), arrived at the ball park in time to hear the game called off on account of cold weather, and wound up in front of the Winslow Homer water colors in the Brooklyn Art museum. That particular sequence of opportunity would be impossible in any part of the West with which I am familiar.

New York, I understand, has changed lots since 1919. But I expect there are a few landmarks left. As, for instance, some of the shirt stores on Fourteenth Street that were closing out last time I saw them because their owners were retiring from business.

When I was last in New York, a man could sit all day in the lounge of the Yale Club without seeing a single poet or novelist. They say it is quite different now.

I never saw a Broadway first night. But I was once present on the second night of a play, and have since concluded, after a short tussle with my conscience, that the difference of one night isn't enough to spoil a good story. "First Night Impressions" is now a popular feature of my repertoire.

I remember telling a man who was born in Brooklyn where to go to get an Erie train.

OUR WEEKLY WESTERN LETTER

(And Why Not, with the Syndicated New York Letters as Popular as They Are?)

These early autumn days are full of bustle and activity along Lincoln Highway and other fashionable thoroughfares. All the people who have been West are going East, and those who have been East are going West. This inspires a profound thought which I am working on and expect to have ready for next week's letter.

I had luncheon with Senator Borah the other day. He told me a most amusing anecdote about the Governor of Nevada, but as it contains political dynamite I cannot repeat it here. Senator Borah, who is a marvelous host, bubbling with high spirits, related a quaint saying he heard while abroad, descriptive of the impoverished condition of the European lower classes. As nearly as the Senator could translate it, it was: "Yes, we have no bananas." No doubt it will reach this country soon.

It is always interesting to stroll through Glacier Park. This season, however, considerable annoyance has been caused by the careless conduct of picnic parties, who leave the glaciers littered with debris and scrawl their names on the sides of some of the prettiest mountains.

A funny thing happened at Laramie, Wyoming, last week. A stranger in town said he was a cowboy, and stuck to his story. It turned out that he told the truth, and he was not traveling with a show, either.

You may be interested to know that out here they don't call themselves bootleggers any more. They are traveling

organizers of the League for Reclaiming the Arid Regions of the West.

Even on those brightly lighted corners where gayety reigns supreme, revelers paused to shed a silent tear when the death was announced the other day of the last survivor of the Custer massacre. This was the first time he has died this year, and it is unlikely that he will equal the 1921 record of four rumored demises and two authenticated ones.

On one of my jaunts through town I stopped to chat with a party of motor tourists. A lady in the party said she was glad she had come West, as she got so much fun out of those funny Western names, such as Walla Walla. The party was from Punxsutawney, Pa.

EULOGY

I admire people who can fix things.

Give them a screw driver and they're happy for the day;
A busted washing machine
Or a prematurely aged lawn mower
Is their idea of the days of real sport.
They are always saying:
"Wait a minute and I'll fix it for you."—
They mean "minute" in a figurative sense.

They are always listening to motors,
Gas or electric,
And diagnosing their ailments by the sound,
Or being daredevils with light sockets.
Their idea of a joke is to holler—
At me, usually—
"Get away from that hose nozzle; what do you know
About machinery?"
The clever rascals!

If I ever, God forbid, take anything apart,
It stays apart.
Man and boy, I have seen a good deal,
But I wouldn't know a cam if I found it
In the soup;
And as for differentials—
They didn't have them when I went to school.
Once I put a washer on a faucet—
The operation was a success,
But the patient died.

EULOGY

You take a man with the mechanical gift,
You take a man who knows the wild gadgets,
Who fixes watches,
And doorknobs,
And magnetos, and everything—
You take a man like that,
And see if I care.

I admire people who can fix things,
They can have my part of the job.

THE MOTHER TONGUE

We (my wife and I) are Westerners born and bred, and we wish it understood that the West is good enough for us. Occasionally, however, we like to take a trip to New York to see a few good plays, our theory being that New York is a delightful place to visit, although, of course, we wouldn't live there for anything.

The last time we went, we decided not to bother with the opera, because it is sung by foreigners in various foreign languages, and we think that America for Americans is a good enough motto for anybody.

So we went to a theater. The electric sign said that the name of the play was, "Vladislav Tscherensky's Droshky." "It sounds rather Russian," said my wife to the man in the box office. "Is it English?"

"No, madam," said the man, "it is Russian."

We went to another theater. The sign said: "Yiddish Players in Repertory." We did not bother the man in the box office there. But the next theater looked more promising. "Oui, Oui, Suzanne." Frivolous, perhaps, but intelligible. Several speculators had tickets for sale. I asked one of them: "Is it in English?" He said: "Nah, French."

That evening we went to a movie, and later, at the hotel, we asked to have some good plays recommended. "Well," said the man who sold theater tickets, "the big successes are the Czecho-Slovak plays, the Imperial Chinese Players, and the German company that is putting on 'East Lynne' in the original *Plattdeutsch.*"

We determined that the next evening we would go to the first theater we came to regardless, hoping for the best.

We did so. Not until we were seated and looked at the program did we have the least intimation of what the play would be like.

The program said: "The Big Stiff, by Eugene O'Neill."

"It sounds English," I said hopefully.

The curtain rose. Two men were on the stage. One of them said to the other: "You —— ——, if it wasn't for the —— —— police, by —— ——, I'd blow the whole —— —— works." The second man said: "Oh, —— ——!"

"Thank God," said my wife, "it is English!"

MEMORANDA FOR AN INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT ON BOOK BORROWING

No "limited-edition-for-subscribers-only" books shall be lent in case of sickness or on presentation of a certificate of character signed by the applicant's Sunday school superintendent.

When books of this class are lent, the lender cannot be held to have assumed responsibility for injuries due either to shock or to disappointment.

Subletting of borrowed books shall be made a capital offense.

Borrowers who underscore words and phrases or who make penciled marginal notations such as "How true" or "fine" shall be isolated for indeterminate periods and allowed only the Tarzan series to read.

Borrows found guilty of the habitual use of scissors, rulers, papercutters or other bulky objects as bookmarks shall be put on probation, during which time they shall be required to read *The Literary Digest* faithfully.

Books used by the borrower's children for purposes of vocational training shall be considered out of circulation.

Books retained so long that the lender forgets who has them are to be considered public property, the lender in such cases being penalized for overconfidence.

Books by H. G. Wells shall be interchangeable; that is, one may be returned in lieu of another without prejudice. The same rule shall apply with regard to the works of Arnold Bennett.

No one shall be entitled to borrow any book (except review copies) unless he is able to show that he has bought at least three books during the preceding six months.

SORTIE NUPTIALE

Another spring is added to the memory of men,
And the June bride is coming to dazzle us again;
Just around the corner she is strictly on the job,
Waiting for the wedding march to start its mellow throb,
And there, beneath the notice of the watchers in the pews,
Is the sad June bridegroom in a pair of squeaky shoes.

The June bride is happy, she is sober and serene,
Used to getting married, if you gather what I mean,
Fluttering as presents come, eager to arrange them—
"Who sent the oyster forks, and dare we exchange them?"—
While, standing on the sidelines with a sympathetic ear,
Is the meek June bridegroom saying "Yes, my dear."

String the satin ribbons, pass around the rice,
The June bride is coming, and the punch is on the ice;
Her picture's in the paper, her trunk is packed to go,
And all her million relatives stand beaming in a row,
While, badly out of focus, and mentally a wreck,
Waits the timid June bridegroom with a collar on his neck.

AN INTERVIEW

"So you want me to tell you how I did it?" said James L. Greb, toying with a paper cutter as he spoke. As an experienced interviewer I noticed at once that his technique with the paper cutter was almost perfect.

"Yes," I said, "the public is deeply interested."

Mr. Greb smiled reminiscently. "I had always," he said, "hoped that some day I might do it. But people discouraged me."

"Men with a vision are always discouraged," I commented.

"Quite so. They said: 'It can't be done.' They told me of other men who had tried for years to get auto license No. 1, and who finally had quit trying, broken before their time. But my purpose was not altered. You might say I followed the Gleam."

"I shall say so," I agreed, making the note.

"My first attempt was not a success. I wrote a personal letter to the Director of the Bureau of Licenses. But I only got license number 796. The next year I went to the Bureau of Licenses in person and saw plainly that I was up against a gigantic political combine. I took 340, the best number obtainable, and went home, to lay my plans and to profit by my mistakes. I am a man who turns mistakes into stepping stones.

"Distasteful as I found it, I went into politics. I shall not weary you with details. Some of them are sordid——"

"I know how it is," I said, tactfully.

"The public may have realized that something was going on beneath the surface. What happened at the last republican

state convention showed plainly enough that a new and powerful influence was at work. You will remember that political writers were asking: 'Who is the new boss, and what does he want?' "

"I remember," I said, as I always do at this point in an interview.

"Well, certain people knew soon enough who I was and what I wanted. The Governor offered me many attractive alternatives. But I was firm. The license plates came yesterday. Would you like to see them?"

So it happened that I was the third person in the state to see the plates. It was an impressive moment.

Impressive, too, was the look on the face of James L. Greb as I left his office, his hands no longer toying with the paper cutter but almost reverently touching the tokens of auto license No. 1. It was the look of a man who would not be discouraged, who could not be beaten, who had followed the Gleam.

THE WEAKER SEX

I've got a girl, and we get along fine,
I like her ways, and she likes mine;
She never is late—very late—for a meeting,
I do the ordering, and she does the eating.
Clinging vine type—I like to have 'em cling—
How she adores me—
Silly little thing!

Just an old-fashioned girl, quiet and refined,
She has the good looks, and I have the mind;
Always consults me, what books to read,
When it comes to movies, we've never disagreed;
Cries "Oh, how lovely!" whatever I bring,
Tells me I'm wonderful—
Silly little thing!

She has the cuteness, and I have the brains,
She won't take a taxi, even when it rains,
Doesn't approve of girls who like to spend money,
Says I should save more—women are funny.
Plays the piano and teases me to sing—
Says my voice is marvelous—
Silly little thing!

Women are funny—my girl pretends
All she expected was just to be friends.
I settled that in a minute, of course—
She has the charm, boy, but I have the force.
Now she insists on "the very cheapest ring,"
Thinks she can manage me—
Silly little thing!

WELL, WHY NOT?

Bulletin

National Board of Film Censorship, Washington, D. C.

* * *

THE FIFTH PROPOSITION OF EUCLID (National Educational Association, 5 reels)—

This picture has been previously reviewed under the title of "The Eternal Triangle." As it is now reissued, certain objectionable features will have to be eliminated before the film can be released.

Title—Disapproved as suggestive. "The Fifth Proposition of Euclid" is considered harmful to the adolescent mind, as it insinuates that Euclid had had previous propositions. Substitute: "The Innocence of Isosceles."

Prologue—In the subtitle, "The angles at the base of an isosceles triangle are equal," eliminate the word "base," which the dictionary defines as "morally low, ignoble."

Reel 1—In scenes showing the girlhood of Isosceles, eliminate views where lines are being drawn. Suggestive. Eliminate subtitle: "Mother, where do the little angles come from?" Eliminate closeup of acute angle. Recent ruling of board allows only obtuse angles to be shown.

Reel 2—In scenes showing Euclid building Pons Asinorum, eliminate word "Asinorum" wherever it occurs. Might be construed as reflecting on Congress. Make second subtitle read: "Later in the afternoon" instead of: "That night."

Reel 3—In scenes between Euclid and Isosceles, eliminate dotted lines wherever they occur. Cut to flash scene of strug-

gle at bridge. Eliminate subtitle: "You are nothing but a common hypotenuse!"

Reel 4—Cut entirely with exception of brief scene preceding subtitle: "And so Lines BE and CD, being parallel, parted never to meet again."

Reel 5—Eliminate scene in which Euclid uses *reductio ad absurdum*. Illustrative of methods of criminals. Cut to shortest possible flash chase scenes leading up to subtitle: "Q. E. D." Insert at end following subtitle: "Dawn breaks over the Sierras—The Dawn of a Better Day."

* * *

The Board announces its disapproval in toto of the recent release of this company (National Education Association), called: "Orthography, or The Spell of Constantinople." Inflammatory.

THE TOP RUNG

Esterbrook Ragweed, the noted best seller,
Whose name is familiar wherever men read,
The author of "Sinners" and "Why Did He Tell Her?"
Has lately became very famous indeed.
His public has doubled, his income has tripled,
His picture confronts you wherever you go—
He is bringing a message of hope to the crippled
By writing page ads for the Komfy-Krutch Co.

Laurels, they tell me, have likewise descended
Gently upon Alice Kingfisher's brow—
She, you'll remember, a decade expended
Turning out plays, and each one was a wow.
That, it appears, though, was just a beginning;
Now Mrs. Kingfisher's genius has room
Greater rewards to be wooing and winning—
She gets up the booklets for Zozo Perfume.

All of the men and the women of letters
Whose names are worth money in editors' eyes
Are free, you might say, from the publisher's fetters,
Are able to work for the ultimate prize.
Their readers are legion, diverse and devoted,
Their subjects are more than ephemeral fads,
And their jewels of thought are digested and quoted
By the marvelous mob that peruses the ads!

MEMOIRS UNWRITTEN

Last week I started to write my memoirs.

It had occurred to me with something of a shock that I was getting on in years without having written a single memoir. I had read that a gentleman in England is, at 33, publishing his recollections, and likely it was the coincidence of our ages being so nearly the same that stimulated me to action.

I sat down with my portable typewriter, and began remembering. The labor of composition was negligible, as I have always been a voracious reader of memoirs, and consider myself reasonably familiar with the technique. I wrote:

"My father and mother were, I suppose, in advance of their time, for, though surrounded by the crass materialism of the late '80's, and with the cultural influence of the Chicago World's Fair yet to be felt, they held to the theory that growing children should be surrounded by beautiful objects. Our home on the outskirts of Mukwanago was, for Southern Wisconsin of that day, *sui generis*.

"As far back as I can remember, the furnishings of our home were chosen for their refining effect on the receptive mind of childhood. When as a boy of five I awakened in the morning, the first thing on which my eye fell was a picture of——"

At this point doubt, in the shape of a cloud no larger than a man's hand, appeared on the horizon. Doubt, I mean, as to whether I was qualified to be a writer of memoirs.

I found that I could not describe the picture upon which my five-year-old eyes first rested at dawn!

It worried me. No other memoir writer would have hesi-

tated, it seemed to me, for a moment. Detailed descriptions of *objets d'art* have always been their long suit. In "Recollections of a Nonagenarian" I was greatly impressed by the page devoted to a Chinese vase the author had seen at his grandmother's home as a child of three.

Doggedly I resumed:

"——the first thing I saw was a handsome picture in a faded gilt frame."

To be honest, I must admit I was not at all certain that the frame was gilt, or that the gilt was faded. Indeed, it may have been an ebony frame. But I let it stand. I felt that the bit of description, though inadequate, might save my face.

Once recovered from the momentary setback, I got along swimmingly for quite a while. With a feeling of elation I realized that I had swung into full stride as I approached the account of my first meeting with a celebrity.

The celebrity was Rutherford B. Hayes, who was at that time in great demand as a speaker at dedications of soldiers' monuments. On one such occasion he was my father's guest, and I remembered so vividly how his ready wit kept the family in gusts of laughter that I intended to make this one of the most important chapters of my book.

I started a passage of dialogue:

"'What,' inquired my father, 'in your opinion, General, is the chief weakness of the argument against civil service reforms?'

"Without an instant's hesitation, General Hayes replied——"

Then came the sickening realization that I could not remember what General Hayes replied. I recollect that it was most amusing, and that for years it formed the basis of my father's most successful anecdote at lodge conventions. But that was all!

It was at this stage that I felt the hopelessness of my handicap. My inability to describe a picture was insignificant

compared with failure to set down, word for word, a conversation of a few short decades ago. No writer of memoirs with whose work I am familiar has ever failed in that respect. The report of the author's 10-minute chat with Bismarck in "My Memory Book" fills four octave pages, and every bit of it is direct quotation. Harold Illingsworth, the famous referee, in "Seventy Years of the Prize Ring," reproduces verbatim an evening's conversational fencing with John L. Sullivan.

Of course I stopped writing. It would have been folly to struggle further. To be a writer of memoirs, I concluded, one must have been trained from childhood to remember everything that is likely to be needed for a book. I had started remembering thirty years too late!

But my son is destined to atone for my failure. At six he has taken, with prodigious success, all the memory courses. He remembers everything, and I predict that his memoirs will be a masterpiece of accurate recollection.

MELODIES UNHEARD

Let me waft a little ditty, lamentoso,
With an undertone of nullified romance,
On the grievance of the bathroom virtuoso
Whose vocal art has never had a chance,
Whose sweet, euphonic humming
In the midst of modern plumbing
Is smothered by the force of circumstance.

Let me warble of the barytones and basses
Whose glorious cadenzas thrill us not,
Who are hardly at their best in public places,
Since they need to have the water running hot,
Whose melodious modulations
Would attract large congregations
If committed in a less secluded spot.

The exceptions are contraltos and sopranos,
Who, for no sufficient reason that I know,
Need drawing rooms and baby-grand pianos
Their very greatest blessings to bestow;
For the prima donna's powers
Are inhibited by showers—
It is better, I suppose, that this is so.

I can prove that the spontaneous contributions
Of men who sing exclusively by ear
While busily engaged in their ablutions,
Are the real, authentic music of our sphere;
And to think their virile pureness
Dwells in relative obscureness
Makes me shed a sad, commemorative tear!

A PAPER ON VIBURNUMS

Mister President and members of the Garden Club, it is a great pleasure to me to be able to attend this meeting tonight, you needn't laugh, Ed Higgins, it really is a pleasure, and I want to assure you that I would have been at more meetings lately if it hadn't been for the rush of business, which has even kept me from working in my garden, where the delphiniums are blooming in great shape right now. They are, too, Doc, I've got a variety that blooms when you would least expect it. No, not acrocliniums, I know what they are, and I can't say I'm very fond of them.

I know you will all be glad to hear that my wife's leg is a lot better, but it won't be out of the cast yet for some time, and when she told me that she had promised to read a paper on Viburnums at this meeting, of course I said that I would be glad to give the paper myself, especially when our charming secretary informed me that they only wanted a short paper, about ten minutes. I heard a funny story along that line. I'm sure that, as we all know each other so well, the ladies won't object if I tell it. It seems a fellow who belonged to the Rotary Club was called up one day by the President and told he would have to make a speech. He said, "All right, but what shall I talk about?" And the president said: "Why, about ten minutes." I always thought that was pretty good. I guess Ed Higgins thought I was going to tell something else.

The only trouble is, Viburnums aren't exactly in my line. I'm more what you might call a rose man. I used to be a good deal of a peony man, but now I guess rose man would

be about right. But I am in favor of lots of Viburnums in a garden because they are fine for variety. What most gardens need is more variety, it seems to me. People don't try to get variety, they all plant the same old things. Now, listen, Doc, I did *not* say I had night-blooming delphiniums. Maybe they do bloom at a different time than yours, but that's because they are a different variety. You think you've got me about those delphiniums, but you come up to the place and I'll show you.

I'll get this paper read quicker if people don't interrupt me. I was saying that what most of our gardens need is more variety. Take spiræa, everybody plants spiræa all over the place, and it makes all their gardens look alike. I heard an old Scotch gardener say a clever thing once about spiræa. He said four out of five have it.

As I was saying, Viburnums are a little bit out of my line. So I am afraid my paper is going to be just a little bit theoretical. That is to say, I have not had much practical experience with Viburnums. So I cannot tell you what I do with them myself. I have got to give you some of the theories of other people. But my wife said that would be all right, that she would have had to do the same thing if she had read the paper. I had some difficulty looking up material. Nobody seems to be writing much about viburnums nowadays. I asked the girl at the library for some material about viburnums, and the stuff she sent me was all about verbenas. I don't suppose you would care to hear about verbenas, but if you do, I've got it all here.

I was quite surprised to find that snowballs are viburnums, that is, they belong to the viburnum family, which I suppose is the same as really being a viburnum. I had never thought of them as anything but snowballs, and of course when I found they were viburnums it made me feel a little more at home with the subject of my paper, because I have had a

good deal of success with snowballs. That was before I took up roses and—go right ahead, Doc, say delphiniums, you can't make me mad.

Well, after I lost out at the library—that was only this afternoon, so I didn't have much time—my wife found a pretty good article on Viburnums in *House and Garden*, and the fellow seems to know what he's talking about, so I guess I won't be giving you any wrong information if I pass what he said on to you. I've got my notes here somewhere.

I suppose most of you take *House and Garden*. If you do, you've seen this article, but maybe some of you haven't, and so I'll give you some of the high lights. There were some dandy illustrations that I wish I could show you, but I'm getting near the end of my ten minutes, it's very kind of you, Mr. President, but I don't want to take any more than my allotted time, because I know there are other papers much more interesting than mine. That isn't the place to applaud, Ed, no, Mrs. Higgins, don't shush him. He's just jealous of me.

Wait till I get these notes arranged. Perhaps the best known of the Viburnums is the Laurustinus (Viburnum Tinus), an evergreen shrub growing some six feet high that bears pink buds and white flowers in late autumn and winter. Another familiar one is the sterile form of the common guelder rose (Viburnum Opulus sterile) which bears rounded heads of white blossoms in June. That's the snowball, you see. Funny, I never knew the snowball was a Viburnum. The true Viburnum Opulus has flat flower bunches which are followed by red fruits, and although an attractive shrub, is scarcely so popular as the variety sterile.

The Viburnum Tomentosum, variety plicatum, bearing showy heads of white flowers, is a particularly handsome shrub, some six feet high, that this is not so commonly grown as its merits deserve, while Viburnum Macrocephalum is still

less often seen, is one of the most handsome of all, though not so useful as the others mentioned. The Viburnums are easily suited and thrive in ordinary soil that is well tilled.

That seems to cover the main gist of the article, which I found most interesting, and I hope I have made it as interesting to you as it was to me. As I say, I am not much of a Viburnum man, and maybe if you had asked me to give you a paper on roses I would have made it more practical and less theoretical, but I wanted to show you that I am not one of those fellows who belong to a Garden Club just in their wife's name, like some I could mention.

HAPPY THOUGH MARRIED

"You kiss her good-bye and go. You leave her to juggle dampers, to worry over a balky fire, to wield a heavy coal shovel—and still you whisper to her: 'I love you' "—from the advertisement of an oil-burning furnace.

* * *

If you say that I am cruel and inhuman,
If you hint of calloused places on my soul,
Because I go, and leave the Little Woman
To shake the grate, and agitate the coal;
If you think that when I murmur my affection
And kiss her, I am false and insincere,
What is there I can say in self-protection?
Listen here . . .

When the chilly days of winter are returning
And the furnace-stoking contract's to be let,
There is no one who can keep the home fires burning—
None I know of—like my Itsy Bitsy Pet.
I am here to tell the world that girl can shovel,
Be the subject matter anthracite or coke,
And the way she warms our poor but honest hovel
Is no joke.

I repeat, she is a wonder with the poker,
And she likewise is a wizard with the grate;
She's a crackerjack, an extra-fancy stoker—
Do I love her? Foolish Question Number Eight.
I may criticize her custards and her hashes
With that subtlety of touch that husbands know,
But as long as she will carry out the ashes,
I'm her beau!

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PS 3521 .I543 G7 1927
King, Stoddard.
Grand right and left

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OREGON STATE LIBRARY
Salem
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NO CHARGE FOR BOOKS.—The books circulated by the State Library are free to all citizens of Oregon who will agree to observe the rules of the library and pay transportation charges both ways. Shipment is made by mail or express and all prepaid charges, including insurance on valuable books, must be remitted upon receipt or return of package.

BORROWERS.—Adults become registered borrowers upon application for service. Minors should give signature of parent or teacher with first request. Give rural route or necessary information if package is to be delivered to country address. PRINT NAME or write plainly. Those living in towns having free public libraries must borrow through them. Loans for school use are charged on school cards when request is made or authorized by principal or superintendent, otherwise the charge is a personal one.

NUMBER OF VOLUMES.—Any reasonable request for books will be granted if applicant wishes them for study or for relending and books are not needed elsewhere.

TIME KEPT.—Books must be received at State Library within 28 days from date of loan. They may be renewed for the same period, upon request, unless reserved for other borrowers. Date upon which books will be due in library is given on notice of shipment. Some books will be issued for shorter periods and may not be renewed, and some collections for schools and clubs are lent for eight weeks.

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